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THE LINCOLN TETRALOGY

BY
DENTON J. SNIDER.

A national epos in four separate poems corresponding to the chief epochs of Lincoln's career, and setting forth especially his inner life and its transformations along with the outer events of his time.

I. LINCOLN IN THE BLACK HAWK WAR.	
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LINCOLN IN THE WHITE HOUSE

A Dramatic Epos of the Civil War

BY
DENTON J. SNIDER

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Book first.

Lincoln and Douglas.

In his new home, heart of the Capital,
The central habitation of the land,
Seat of the Nation's will in act supreme,
Known as the White-House to the folk,
Lincoln uneasy lounged upon his chair
With perturbations bubbled from the deep,
Waiting and watching in reposeless hope
For whom or what or why he hardly knew.
Still he had presage of one man's approach,
Though with an Alp of longing on his heart
Which seemed to crush and prison him just there,
As he upheaved his soul's foreboding sighs:
"There is a Presence here, although unseen,
It haunts me with unknown expectancy

6 *LINCOLN IN THE WHITE HOUSE—BOOK I.*

Of some great visitor on whom turns time
When huge events break over to new channels.
It bids me watch and will not let me go;
It weights me down if I but start to leave;
Still I must take a look upon the heavens
From here, and yet I dare not quit this House.”

So Lincoln straightened out his stature tall
With slow sheer strength uprising from his seat
As if he would upbear a new-born world
In mighty Atlantean sufferance,
Strode to the window for a heart-worn glance
And gazed into the welkin overhead
Darkening before him round the distant hills.
It was an April day of sultry mood
Which lowered on the streets of Washington,
And twilight slyly drew a lengthening veil
Over the bosom of the Capitol
Whose sovereign dome, unfinished still,
Now in the stress of being built complete,
Played with the passing clouds a spectral dance
And threw fantastic shapes athwart the sky,
At which the hurried multitude would gaze,
Turning around just for a breath’s quick wonder,
Then onward seethed and surged the other way,
Facing the mansion of the President,
Whose light was flickering fitful on the gloom.

Who is the man there pushing through the mass
Which rages round the White-House in huge waves
Of human atoms lashed to furious storm
As by some elemental power driven?
He dives forthright through the dense whirl of life,
His features are drawn tense with resolution,
His shaggy locks are not sleeked down to-day
But flap about his lion-head in wrath;
The billowy crowd yields way to his set face,
As if a battle-ship cut through the foam
To reach the opposing obstacle for fight.
All scan him well as he goes sweeping on,
With anxious quest of look: What will he do?
For from his will hangs balancing the Nation,
Aye more, the world's futurity is his
Awhile to-day to pivot on his deed.
His steadied stride swerves not to right nor left,
Straight to the mark he shoots his body's bullet,
Not large, but rounded full of force and combat.
Upon the steps he mounts and treads the sill,
Bearing with him a node of History
If he could only see himself in act.
A ling-time friend has pushed to touch his arm,
And breathe request: "Let me go with you
thither?"
Firm-worded fell the answer: "No! alone
I must be there to-day—just two—and God."
Then through the crowded waiting-room he slips

Shot at by glances of inquiring eyes,
To where the usher bids him enter in.

That man was Douglas named, of Illinois,
Renowned the Senate's greatest Senator,
Now speeding to this new-born task, his last
And highest for his country's future weal,
When news had come that Sumter had been fired on.
He hastens to the chosen President,
His life-long rival in the race he lost
For the chief magistracy of the land,
Who now sits swaying to and fro in doubt,
To offer loyal service of himself,
And all whom his example might inspire—
A million stalwart votes and more he polled
Last fall through his sheer personality.
As he takes off his hat and shakes his mane,
His leonine mane and heavy-chested trunk,
Leaning aback as ready for a spring,
Behold! Lincoln appears with look released
Suddenly to a dimpled flow of joys—
They, living counterparts of one another
In stature, shape, and contour of the face,
Opposites even to the hand and hair.
All of their former days they stood apart
And were at odds in the whole game of life;
But now they seem to fit symmetrical,
To harmonize their dissonance's jar

Into one melody of mind and mould
And integrate two souls in one great cause,
Two mighty men turned to the superman
In sudden mutual clasp of heart and hand.

There stood the twain together like tower and base,
One with an overlook, one with support,
Both felt the Nation's mighty clash within
Tearing their hearts by its discordant throes,
Yet slowly turning to a deeper unison,
When Lincoln was the first to utter speech:
“Long separate, but now the more united
In that last bond which kins all patriots,
Bond of the Union's life here in us sealed !
Perchance the bond too of our destiny
Yet to be written in our very blood !
Of all men in the world I wished for you
Just you—I was then praying for your presence
When the high Powers brought you in response.
For at the bottom of my heart's best hope
Is bubbling now my glad presentiment
That this our union may foreshadow too
Restored Union of our States distract
With a new birthdom of the Nation.”

Douglas with rising throat, untongued of speech,
Clasped his old rival's hand in silent yes.
He had begun to have his far-off gleams

Out of a world beyond the common ken,
Though not addicted to a rapturous strain
In the stern business of his word and deed.
Yet the strong moment drives him soon to utter
What has been lurking long unvoiced within:
“Lincoln, beforehand let me say you this:
In that debate with you some two years since,
Despite the fierce encounter of our wits,
I felt our deeper oneness underneath
The outer flash and stroke of sword-like tongues,
E'en had forewarnings of this very hour.
And, Lincoln, you possess the gift of love,
Can rouse its throbs in every human soul
Who hears your voice or looks upon your face.”

Lincoln stared melting at the frank avowal,
And flowed at once into a like acknowledgment,
Trembling about his lips with grateful words
As in his heart's own tone he throbbed his echo:
“I never did appreciate you fully,
Douglas, for I must first confess myself
To you, and win from conscience mine own shrift.
A greater character you now have shown
Than I am, greater far in recognition
Of other's worth, suppressing jealousy;
You have outprized me just in prizing me,
Which hitherto I have not done for you;
Forgetful of a life-time's rivalries,

In this henceforth your rival I shall be,
And ban suspicion from its secret nook
To equal you in magnanimity.

Here by your presence I am thrilled to vow
Devotion to our sacred cause anew
And sink, like you, myself in duty's ocean
To cleanse me pure of blights of serving self,
Fountained in love's oblivion of hate."

When he had spoken thus he reached his hand,
That massive hand with sinewy fingers clutching
In former years the ax or iron sledge
Or knotted maul to cleave the oaken bole.
But now it had to do another task:
Unroll a scroll of paper written on,
Which act he prefaced with these measured words:
"I wish to read for your approval this
My call for troops to meet revolt now loosed;
I have been waiting for you here—just you—
Though my whole cabinet agree to it,
Without assent of yours I would not dare
Issue it to the people, loyal still,
Of whom you represent by vote the half
Better than any other man to-day;
I know it well and do confess it here,
Yours is more true to you than mine to me;
Yours is your own more than your party's own;
So the first union is of you and me,

And then of yours and mine without a rift ;
Thus may we bring about the final union
Of these constituent States now sundering ;
Your word is what must unify, not mine—
You rise the master of this crisis over all.”

Lincoln then read the trumpet call to arms,
That lofty first endowment of the Nation
With the authority to save its life
When jeoparded by enemies within,
Invoking the whole people to march forth
In the defence of that which makes them whole.
His eager looks he lavished on his guest
And closely watched the latter’s answering eyes :
“ That’s it—just what I now would do myself
If I were President,” said radiant Douglas.
“ It has the ring of my heroic model
In word and deed, of mine own Andrew Jackson
When he near thirty years ago was forced
To grapple with this same South Carolina,
The discontented State both then and now,
Fault-finder general of Commonwealths,
The least republican in constitution—
Its greatest grievance is, methinks, itself.
Then I was but a stripling, scarce eighteen,
But to my patriotic bent I gave myself,
Was ready to enlist, started to drill ;
The same old feeling throbs still in this breast ;

I took my early oath to the Union then
Which I shall keep—I swear it now to you.””
Then he held up his hand to take the vow
Which from his soul irradiated him
With all the glow of blessed consecration.
Lincoln was rapt and stood in wondering glow
At this new greatness of the man before him.
He felt uplifted to new self-surrender,
Hearing the lofty words of one he deemed
His whole career’s most dread antagonist,
And touched his words with tender chords of voice :
“Be it now mine to imitate your act
Which has attuned my deepest difference
And set before me clearer my true goal ;
Diviner than myself I hail you now
In this high all-forgiving deed like God’s ;
But I shall live up to the same fulfilment
Which you reveal me as the prize of life,
Ridding me of mean envy’s secret nagging,
That I may share with you that common worth
Which fuses both our souls into one thought
To save what is salvation’s very self—
Our country’s institution, best-born of time.””

Then lesser Douglas rose as if gigantic,
His stature seemed to grow just there
To aught of a colossal magnitude
As he uplifted his full voice sonorous,

The echo of his heart's swell'n overflow,
And raised his hand upright, palm to the front,
As he would swear before the magistrate
Of Heaven his everlasting fealty:
“My President, to you I pledge my oath;
Just in your presence here I would enlist,
Under that call of yours and take my place
In the fore rank of pressing volunteers,
Ready to march, the first enlisted man!”

He strode the floor alert in springy pace,
And shook his lion's mane with that huge roar
Which seemed to voice a million of his followers,
Then leaped elastic as he shot his words:
“Methinks I am become a youth again,
My memory shifts me to reality,
Each muscle is keyed up to test the battle,
I cannot longer hold me in delay;
You, my Commander, I await your orders.”
Deliberately Lincoln dropped his front,
As if he would turn inward to himself
For a brief moment's counsel with his soul,
Then slowly throbbed his mind into his voice:
“My first enlisted man—and greatest!
Greater than I am, I repeat the thought
Just now you stand above me in this crisis:
You can unite the North, in that same act
You can divide the South within itself;

Whilst I—well do I read the fateful sign—
Divide the North, but unify the South,
Unless you bring your poll of myriads
To me, and tie them to the Union's car.
Your votes for President combine with mine
Through you—through you alone—I know it well,
Through magic of your personality.
Your deed then is the grandest deed of all,
The presage and the starting point of victory;
The primal battle of this war you have
Already won—I hail you Conqueror.”

But Douglas turned and looked off at himself
O'erweighted by the vast acknowledgment,
Until he could pick up discourse again:
“Friend—now I shall address you first as friend
Though I have never thought you such before—
Your words have spoken out my deepest hope
Which you have raised to light for mine own vision
From where it has lain hid to me myself
Far down within my soul's dark underworld,
The buried treasure of my best self's being
Lifted by you that I possess my own,
Methinks for the first time in all my life.”
The speaker stood a moment's silent spell
As gazing into depths beyond his speech,
When he looked up, out of his heart to view
A little bit of his own history:

“I saw this struggle coming on for years
As Senator in yonder Capitol;
From my high vantage perch I watched its growth,
By compromise I sought to stem its course
Whenever it would threaten dissolution;
I threw it many a bone to pick in peace
That it might still its ever-gnawing hunger
Which always craved for rule more territory;
I humored it, but ever to my cost;
In lesser things I yielded oft my will
Quite to the point where duty dreaks her staff,
Hoping to save the greater and the greatest,
This Union of the States, without the blood,
The fratricidal penalty now doomed.
All, all in vain; my work of compromise
Which made me try to temporise with God,
Has been rejected with a scowled disdain
By those to whom I sacrificed myself
For all my years up to the present time.
But now I see my higher immolation,
And feel me portioned with your dower divine,
The love which you impart e'en to your foes.”

Tall sympathetic Lincoln looked his heart
Which he pulsed forth in tremulous tones of voice
As he on his part lipped confession too:
“How clearly now I see all that you did,
And grasp the motive of your great career

Where it beneath all difference of party
Conjoins with mine in love of our one country !
With that deep spirit of your life to-day
I would commune and seek its present help,
Which is the time's last need, and mine, mine too.
You I have had in mind for weeks, for months,
While I was helpless held at home in Springfield,
And watched in impotence the wrecking storm.
I would repeat to you my surest thought :
Yours is the will on which this moment hinges,
Turning to triumph or defeat just now :
Yours the initiative I say, not mine,
Although I voice the call, you give the sign
Which I have been beseeching of the Powers.
This is my prayer to the timely man :
'O make us whole and cleave the foe in twain !'
So you appear to step from out the air
In answer to my fervent supplication,
As when a spirit drops down from above
In blest fulfilment of some high decree,
The presage of our victory at last ;
The only rainbow promise I have seen
Is yours since I have come to take my seat
In this uneasy Presidential chair.'"

Such was the dark ray which escaped the guard
Of Lincoln's melancholy inner world ;
But it he sought to overtake with gleams

Of recognition bright for his high guest,
Culling from memory some pleasant flowers
To counteract the gloom of what he said:
“Let me repeat: that act of courtesy,
I never have acknowledged it, alas!
The fairest gem of my inauguration,
Bright it is treasured in my gratitude;
When I, distraught at the great throng of faces
And the far greater pressure of the time,
Crushed with a Nation’s vast expectancy,
I knew not even where to put my hat;
Then you stepped up and held it in your hand,
With radiance so gracious from your eyes,
With whispered words of comfort from your lips,
That I at once took heart and pulsed it forth
Into my tongue that all the audience fused—
Your followers and mine became then one
More through your look and act than what I said.
Hear me! alone I never could have done it
Douglas, a stone rolls from my weighted back
For I have failed to mete you recognition;
I say you this confession to your face.”

Tall Lincoln rose to his full stretch of stature,
The little stoop which always curved his shoulder
Seemed then to straighten out and make him
mighty,
While Douglas upward bent his gleaming eyes;

A stride, almost a military strut
He took across the floor against some foe
Invisible, as he discharged his words:
“My chieftain now, Lincoln, greatest to be
Of all our Presidents lined down the future,
Commander of the Nation give me your orders!”

More tenderly then Lincoln tuned his voice
Quite breathed to whisper confidential:
“Again you have forerun my dearest wish
Which at your bidding I unbosom you.
Haste to our common home, spacious North-West,
Which is the foremost child and aye free-born
Of this maternal Union; rouse its people
By your compelling might of eloquence,
And to the cry of their endangered mother
Rally them in one mighty folk-soul’s swell,
Kindle them to a rolling fiery mass
Of live volcanic valor, thence to swoop down
The stream-bed of the Mississippi’s flood,
Freeing the Nation’s future valley-home
Far to the tepid Gulf of Mexico.
Then hitherward shall turn that human tide
Resistless of our patriot’s soldiery,
Perchance around e’en to this Capital
Through all the realm of mad rebellion
’Twill have to march before its work is done,
Restoring this as center of the Nation.

To you in privacy I dare divulge
What I must keep unsaid though oft it knocks,
The hid presentiment of days to come:
That valley is the way to our salvation.”

More boldly then with words broke Douglas in,
As he unlocked a secret chamber of his soul:
“You hit my purpose right upon the head—
Hear too from me a note of prophecy,
Though mine be not the gift oracular:
The Mississippi is the marching road
For men to do the Nation’s winning deed:
Those men of ours—I deem I know them well.”

Lincoln’s sunk eye shot lightening of surprise:
“Did you think too of that which I must hide?
I never tongue the thought here in the East
Where is the strain of local vanity
Which I must not offend by noting it,
But hold myself impartial to each part.
Still I may whisper you my last night’s dream
That we can never reach revolted Charleston,
Unless we follow our great river’s lead
Even in all its tortuosities
Which coil and roar through so much space and
time,
But never fail at last to reach the goal.”

Douglas let fall his chin upon his breast
And slowly spoke with meditation's look:
“Yes, we are thinking now the self-same thought,
We both are even dreaming the one dream,
And both our hearts pulse with one stroke together.
Hence first I shall fly to our common State
Of Illinois, and call to arms her sons,
Unite them all, both parties, yours and mine,
In this great enterprise—I must be off.”
“The only man who can do that—’tis you,”
Spake Lincoln with an emphasis of heart,
“And yours I deem the first great deed of war,
The most important to be done just now—
Unite the North, divide the South—that’s yours—
Yours for all future time of history;
Methinks I see the world turn on your act.
God speed you well, my first enlisted man
Of thousands or of millions, and the greatest.”

The orator turned soldier wheels about
And marches pensive quite unto the door;
But ere he trod the sill, he faced again
Lincoln, who closely followed in his steps,
Forefeeling somewhat still unsaid by both
Which throbbed for utterance within each soul.
They felt the need in mutual mystery
To tell new revelations of themselves,
The bodeful secrets of their underworld

Which darkly lurked within their present deeds.
The military Douglas calmed his speech
From war into low brooding tones of care:
“Let Death now strike me down—this shall I do;
For I would rather die at such conjuncture
When I have reached the oneness of myself,
And feel me vanish in my country’s life,
Yielding my singleness unto the All.
In this forespoken act of mine there lurks
For me a shadowy sense of doomful Fate
Which haunts my soul with dark presentiment.
Sad was I when I hither came—I leave
Instilled with a new joy of harmony,
As if I touched the center of my being,
And there discovered first my own true Self
Enshrined within my country’s largest aspiration.
I feel nerved up to strive man’s topmost reach;
Let Fate me slay, I shall coerce it still,
The master of it through its own success,
Stamping my impress on the age’s loftiest deed
Just in my personal evanishment.”

Thus Douglas revered against his wont
And strangely rhapsodized in prophecy;
He thrilled a strand far down in Lincoln’s soul,
Whereof vibrations rose into his words:
“Therein again you do prefigure me
And strike concordant notes with mine own doom;

I too feel Destiny twang my heart-strings oft,
Which now your words attune as if a harp
Trills in response to wafture of your breath.
All through the gamut of our souls we seem
Communing from the sources nethermost
Which upward well to view we wot not whence.
How unexpected is all this in you!
Long have I known you, heard you often talk,
I never thought you had a vision, trance,
Or ecstacy, but kept to facts of sense.
It is the time's upheaval in us both,
The outbreak of a world which hitherto
Unconscious lay far down in every soul,
But now sends forth new sudden rivulets,
From its mysterious depths of first creation;
An oversoul is working in us too,
As well as in the people's mighty tides
Responsive to a Presence universal."

Thus told they of their secret selves in turn,
And bared their hidden lives in mutual strain,
When both hushed to a moment's speechlessness.
Soon Douglas damped his voice to a whispering
dream,
And lisped out of the future this weird presage:
"Let me confess to what I here forefeel—
The first to fall I shall be in this battle
To which I go as soldier now in arms,
Obeying your command and mine, and God's.

Never before have I had premonitions,
I always laughed at those who had—at you
Dropping a word in your sepulchral mood ;
But now there dogs me everywhere I walk
A bodelement strange of brief mortality,
An airy summons to the Judgment last
To which each step I take is but approach.”
There Douglas stopped, held in reflection mute
As if he hesitated to speak out
Some word which would not let itself be hid,
But stammered with a jog across his lips :
“Lincoln, not I alone am brought to feel
The dread pursuit of doomful intimations,
But my own household too, the innocents,
Are whelmed into participation strange :
My women folk are haunted by this mood
Of boding prescience quite akin to mine
And try to hold me back from daring it.
But I shall go, of augury defiant
To outface Fate, turning its mortal blows
Back on itself, compelling it through death.”

The ominous word smote Lincoln to a quake
Which ran a surge of momentary shocks
Along each member of his body’s frame ;
Again the common underlying chord
Reverberated sympathy in both
As Lincoln’s heart-swells palpitated up

Into his speech and a small tear in tune
Coursed tumbling down his sallow channelled cheeks :
“ Another consonance ! what means it all !
Are we intoxicated from that cup
Of rare divine elixir which the Gods
Once drank according to the ancient fable ?
A draught in common somewhence we are drawing,
For listen to the match of your experience
Which seems to rise as counterpart to mine :
Last night as I lay waking in my thought
I heard my helpmate shriek in restless sleep
Almost the words of Caesar’s wife, Calpurnia ;
She shouted agonies in hideous dream :
Help, murder ! Ho, they slay the President.”

Lincoln staggered at the piercing blow
Of his own voice sharp-pointed to a scream ;
He grasped the arm of Douglas for support
As if beneath his own self’s imaged thrust
He might be falling in his dying blood ;
’Twas only for a moment’s passing flash,
When he stood up erecter than before.
But both were silenced by the doomful word,
Each felt the palsied touch upon his tongue,
But each was listening a voice within,
Their spirits choired together Heaven’s music,
Each tuned the other’s soul above itself
Unto the final harmony of man
Which tensed the will to its divine resolve :

“Now let me do and let me die—I dare not stay—
No longer victim blanched of Destiny
I crouch my weary days, but as her master
I throne myself just by my dying deed.”

They parted, heroes under doom of death
That they might give unto the Nation life,
The first and last of mighty sacrifices;
Immortal made through their mortality,
By ministry they won Fate’s mastery.

Douglas went sliding muffled through the throng,
Unrecognized, and dodging every lamp
Lest he be stopped by the salute of friends,
Or plied with questions of the eager crowd.
Soon he is speeding to his own North-West
Whose folk he thrills with love for the Union’s life
In mighty eloquence of word and deed
As he upholds the rule of that majority
Which had elected not himself but Lincoln
Who long had been his chief antagonist.
Thus to his greatest triumph his defeat
He turns through noble magnanimity,
Transforming failure to highest heroship,
Outshining all success by character
Whose prize the folk acclaimed without dissent,
So he was crowned the greater conquerer,
Touching the height of life’s long climb of deeds.
And yet his heart was breaking in these days

Of victory supreme ; his country's rift
Had rent his life in twain e'en as he spoke,
And gave a pathos to his parting voice,
The patriot's testament unto his people,
Which they engrossed on Memory forever.

He counseled war, which then was slaying him,
With every word he felt the inner cut,
He flashed his tongue a sword against disunion,
The counterstroke fell hot upon his heart.
And so time turned his thrust back to himself,
The mightier his deed, the mightier his pain ;
The top of greatness was fatality,
On work supreme was laid the cost supreme,
The highest good has too the penalty,
For not a fortnight passed ere lapsed his voice ;
He spoke his last address unto the folk,
And capped the very summit of his days
Standing a moment in the Eternal's sheen
Upon the mount of God transfigured,
Then drooped to bed with death upon his brow.
The Nation witnessing his tragedy
Shuddered at view of its own mighty clash
In him as its first representative.
Beyond he passed before the people's eye,
A foretold prototype it felt in him
Of what was just beginning in itself
Repictured on the many million hearts,
The war two-sided in each living soul.

PRELUDE.

So Lincoln had his interview supreme
With Douglas at the turning of the time.
The age's constitutive parts they seemed,
Before divided, now one will they formed,
Presaging final oneness of their country.
Alone they talked, unwitnessed in their speech ;
No history records their confidences,
No written document, no memory—
And yet their lips preluded the new hope
Which spurred the folk to nationality ;
Nathless their tale will not be lost to time.
But hear ! another voice has tuned the call
To mint to melody the golden mine—
The riches of their speech coercing Fate
To triumph of new love o'er ancient strife
In mutual fuse of personality.
That voice recording was once called the Muse
Who to old Homer breathed the secrets high
Of what the Gods above had said and done—
The last determiners of all events
Which sweep along the aeons to their goal,
Bearing the mortal in their hidden stream.
But now that Muse antique shows use of years,
And can no longer pipe her youthful note,
And what she says has lost its primal creed ;

Her very self is now unfaithed of men.
But still that upper realm divine exists
And weaves into all human destinies
In which it will not let itself be missed,
Or stay unvoiced of noble poesy.
It rules—more mightily than ever rules—
With impress on the doer's highest deed,
Though tattered be its once supernal shapes,
And have to be re-clothed and e'en re-shaped
For faith and for imagination too,
That they may be once more presentable.

And so this Prelude of our Lincoln's sunrise
To be now built of glints foreplays this note;
The true portrayal of the world above
And of the Order ruling thence the deed
Becomes anew the test supreme of writ
Most worth to be of man remembered.
That world must be re-built to measured speech
And shown the spirit's deepest living faith
In forms forged fresh of elemental soul
Amid the epoch's dread emergencies—
Not sent down to the hero from above
As feigned by Chian bard long long ago,
And in our brain reverberating still
With golden echoes from a thousand strains,
Through avenues of singing centuries
Invoking to their song the Gods of Greece.

The Gods must be re-shaped for the new aeon
From the creation's first material
By the great man of time who needs them most,
And when he needs them most at pinch of Fate,
Framing them from himself and from the All,
Fusing eternity's two miracles
Into responses for the listening folk.

Lincoln will have his higher Presences
Which come to him, yet are his own as well,
Re-made by him and still already made;
So he within will live an overlife
Above the clashing duties of the day,
Communing with existences beyond,
Which also must appear in the account,
Revealed as the supernal potencies,
Unfolding in him with his noblest works.

And Love will flit to him just at the need
In semblance of a vanished shape he knew,
Yet rising from the mortal one to all,
Imparting to his soul its sacred self
If for a moment he may lapse to hate,
Lifting him from the slough of the mad time.
And so it strangled him much when he heard Douglas
Acknowledging a fealty of Love
Unto himself, transformed from enmity.
“That is the top of personality

To change the heart from foe to friend," cried he
"Now I shall live for Love's own deepest trial,
Re-tested every day by fire of battle;
I may think better of myself for that."
So Lincoln thrilled in blessed recognition
That he had touched far down his rival's Love;
Such he conceived his nature's deepest worth,
And tuned a moment's joy, as to himself
He tingled thoughts of self-acknowledgment.
He rose and stirred about as inly driven
To utter to himself, now left alone,
This interview's upbursting memories,
Which he would letter on his living heart.

Book Second.

Lincoln with Himself.

“Gone to his highest deed and doom in one!
To point the pinnacle of life with death!
So Douglas now sets out for his last work
With whose fulfillment strikes his hour of Fate;
When he has done his best, that is his end.
My lot is also such, whene’er it falls;
I feel it troubling in each drop of blood,
As long as sour misfortune pours her frowns
Upon my days, I shall be living still;
While I shall toil at my life’s task and fail,
Death cannot smite me at my sorest tug,
Although I pray him to deliver me.
I have to live on ever in defeat,
Of my existence failure is the food.

I know prosperity is just what fates me;
Like Douglas I now see myself in this:
My moment's moment is to be my last."

So Lincoln's melancholy bubbled up
From farthest-welling fountains of his soul,
As he looked out into the gloaming dusk
Through which the dimming form of Douglas fleeted
Until it had become a memory
Suggestive of their common destiny.
Whereat he turned again to his self's talk:
"He knows he marches to his triumph's top
From which he plunges to the dark abyss,
Precipitated by the viewless Powers!
So he—so I am marching too, methinks.
But strange—how strange it is with me and Douglas!
Our lives somehow will never keep apart,
But interwind, attract, and then repel,
And then again attract at last as now,
Still circling in the distance round each other!
Two dozen years and more have rolled away
Since I began to spy his character;
And still I have not fathomed it as yet.
I found him standing at my entrance first
In public life when I was chosen one
Of old Vandalia's callow legislators.
We often met and simply passed salute,
Each of us feeling then some rivalry

Unconscious, yet at work within our souls,
Creative germ of our careers to be.
I felt it when I boldly challenged him
To swim with me across Kaskaskia's flood,
Laying a trifling wager which I won.
In social gatherings at Springfield too,
We spake our mutual distant compliments
Yet with a secret emulation felt
Far down in Nature's primal portion.
We wooed the same career, public and private,
Aye, the same heart in love we wooed of woman;
I followed close his track as Senator,
Since his successor I had hoped to be,
And clap the laurel from his brow to mine.
But he outstripped me far and rapidly
So that I quit the contest with his fame
Quit Congress where he shone the rising star,
And lapsed into my hope's dark subsidence,
Doomed to long years of purgatorial trial.
But resurrection came in that debate
Before the yeomanry of Illinois
When I and Douglas clinched in warring words
Not three years since—it was a battle drawn—
I won the people, he the office won.

So I have watched him under all conditions,
And by encounter personal him tested,
Until I weened I had his outline charactered,

But in his deepest self I knew him not,
Never suspected what he showed to-night,
That hidden underlife of pregnant dreams,
With dim foreshadowings of haps to come.
What possibilities lurk in that world
Which men call mind with easy thoughtlessness !
What untold layers in the soul of man !
All genesis lies stratified in me—
Deposit of the whole creation's growth,
Heirdom of all the universe's Time,
Be it the past, or be it yet to be !

I cannot ban my fresh surprise at Douglas
Bursting to sunlight like a cosmos come !
In him I saw the crafty politician,
I swayed in doubt of his last fealty ;
I watched him breach in twain his party,
Then a like inroad turn against my side.
I questioned if he might not breach as well
This Union of the States, the world's best hope,
Whose burden is now fallen me to save.
But no ! there stood he firm and whole with me—
And undivided his allegiance
In diamond flawlessness of loyalty.
That is the unit of his character
Which unifies himself beneath all scission,
And unifies myself to-day with him,
Yea unifies the folk with both of us

In one vast surge of patriotic fervor,
And will at last re-seal this broken Union,
Whose oneness I now see foretold in Douglas.
No doubt he wished to be the President
In every throb of heart and cast of brain ;
Each year the darling passion would blaze out,
Yet life but fed him with defeated hope.
I won the prize of him so coveted,
And still he comes to offer me his service ;
Could I have done as nobly too by him—
Forgotten all these years of rivalry,
And left unheeded all my party hate,
Unfelt the venomous sting of jealousy ?
I think me thus : were he now in my place,
Could I have come and tendered him my help,
Yea more, my life, my very destiny ?
I shiver at my question asked myself !
I dare not say I would have equaled him
In his heroic magnanimity ;
I fear a weakness which I oft have felt,
And yet his was the crowning deed to do,
And his the peak outtopping Presidency.
I now shall hold it up as my ideal,
The star of worth by me to be aspired ;
Him I shall rival at his highest point
Where excellence hath pinnacled his deed—
Unite the Union's friends, divide its foes,
Thus turn secession on itself to rend.

My anchor chief I feel that act of Douglas,
I shall dare issue now the Proclamation,
And challenge the arbitrament of blood ;
For he has bonded with me the Union's friends,
Reviving all its grand expectancy.

But mark again the fatal act supreme
Of his, for it he deems his tragedy ;
His greatest day is just his day of doom.
The garland of his noblest victory
Is wreathed in glory by grim destiny,
Only that it be laid upon his grave.

Oh ghastly irony of mortal Fame !
Therein his lot, I read, attunes with mine :
The day I dare once call my happiest
Will be my last—I now can hear its knell—
And I, the man of peace, must stay in war ;
When ends this clash of arms just now begun
I end, my peace is not of life but death ;
The joyful bells which peal the concord new
Of the saved People toll me to my rest
Eternal, the Union living sees my corpse,
The Nation's gash of Fate turns back on me.
When I have closed secession's last rift
And made my People whole in a new birth,
That is the moment on the horologue
Of time which ticks mine own evanishment.

The chasm of existence then will ope
And gape for me, with sudden monstrous gorge
And in one swallow I shall disappear.
But why this brooding on my mortal lot!
Not yet it is, that day is not yet here,
I still must gloom and suffer in defeat
Till my defeater, life, is too defeated:
Take heart from this, oh melancholy thought!
As long as I can be unhappy here,
I shall not perish in my misery,
But toil at sorrow's task till Fortune smiles
One happy day which is my judgment day,
Yet is the Nation's day of prime deliverance,
The great releaser from the labor-pains
Sprung of the bearing of a new-born world.”

Thus Lincoln in the White-House felt himself
To be prophetic of his destiny
Foreshadowed by that deep co-incidence
Which bound his lot at last in one with Douglas,
Whose image always would leap up within him
And make him throb his wonderment to words:
“O Douglas! I cannot keep thee out of mind,
So coupled are we in what lies beneath
The outer surface of us opposites!
More intimate to me than all things else
Is now this fact of him first come to light:
He too is owner of a throbbing underworld

Replete with bodements and monitions dim,
Aye peopled with quick images of soul.
He too knows visions, dreams, and prophecies,
Can even hear a spirit's airy talk
In moments of his vision's ecstasy.
Oft have I heard him scoff at all such toys,
Proclaim to me his valiant skepticism,
Which puts to death all spectral shapes of fogland,
The hauntings of aged superstition's reign.
He said that I could have monopoly
Of all that nether life in which he knew
I had a share, inheritance of old.
I deemed him but intelligent of prose,
Not of the mold of winged fantasy,
Reft of communion with supernal powers,
Spread flat on level practicality.
How keen his mind would see and work his means,
Never afraid to use them for his end,
And sly in labyrinthine circumvention
Without the pang of scrupulosity!
So held I all of him till up to now.

His speeches have no storied wealth of fable,
And little anecdote or humorous flash,
No rapturous vision of the upper world
Set to the music of eternity,
Whence Gods look down control of mortal men,
And bid us share with them the reign divine.

But facts were all his eloquence, bald facts,
Marshaled in force, oft hot with rhetoric,
Shunning imagination's golden flight,
Unpanoplied with gleaming metaphors,
Without the rhythmic cadence of the word.

But now behold the man's new revelation
He joins me in my deepest loyalty—
Not only that, but this which is more strange,
He dares descend down into Nature's night-shade,
Companioned with me in that ghostly realm
Where lurk dark Fate and all the Powers unseen,
Directive agencies of human souls
For guidance, warning, and for punishment.
There in that dreamt domain of unlit life
Where dwells the Self unsunned of consciousness,
Where stalk in stealth our oldest energies
Or lift to life in hoary ancestry,
We found each other, felt each other out,
At those last depths of our humanity.

We saw ourselves beneath all difference,
And recognized our common destiny,
As there we faced each other, soul to soul,
And held communion deeper than our speech;
Yet not alone we tokened eye to eye,
Between us stood the upper President.

The pivot ultimate of our careers
Moving from sides of life quite opposite
Unto the center of our universe
I see—I realize for the first time,
Confessing to my sin against his worth.
Now I shall watch his lot until his close,
For it will mirror mine, e'en if drawn out
Into the testing years which are to come,
Letting me glimpse myself ahead of time
To hint me of my fate far in advance.

When we antagonized three years agone,
And met in hot debate before the folk,
I only thought him as my antitype
Who never could be twinned in soul with me.
And yet he gives me credit for this concord
Which has, by me unthought, sprung out the dark;
He says I touched it secretly within him
When I would speak and stir the people's sense
Of a community of man with man,
For he in all the folk felt the response.

Still that dumb feeling must have first been his,
And ready to be roused from dormancy
When the right moment came with the right word—
That is the soul's own precious mystery,
Which it holds hid within its brooding seas.

What is that far-down human unity
From which upbursts this severality of ours,
This separation of us into selves,
As if we sprang of one great over-man
From whose vast Self we snatched our own self's
spark—

In whom we all can be again united—
Who fuses keenest contrarieties,
Such as were Douglas and myself before,
And with us melts the people each and all
Aglow in one vast common fire of soul,
So that we are again one individual ?
But yesterday the world seemed all distract,
The land, the time was breaking into pieces,
The crack of chaos, coming quickly, shot
Through the whole universe of God and man.
But now from Douglas springs a harmony
Which tunes me to a higher unity
And inwardly accords me to myself.

Fain would I now commune with Presences
Who at my better moments come to me
Impressing on my mind their messages
Which voiceless tell me the decrees above,
And make my house their shrine of weal and woe.
They form for me the other Cabinet
Which I found here installed already,
And busied of themselves with my affairs,

Nameless and of me unsolicited,
The overworld's advisers of my office.

But Douglas! I cannot shake his image off,
Nor loose me of his lot so twinned with mine
And brothered deeply in our very hearts;
Fresh throbs keep bubbling up from depths un-
known.

Another thought comes creeping-in uncanny,
And tongues me its forbidden secrecy:
I am a fatal love to mine most dear,
So that I have to fear a new affection;
My strongest feelings coiling serpentine
Crush in their mortal folds just my beloved.

But see! here drops the interruption dread
Which drives to nought my higher intercourse;
A member of my Lower Cabinet
That comes to touch me at some faulted point,
Pulling me down to vision temporal
Which only sees the task of finitude;
I know what he will say just by his gait
Which hints the soldier's charge with gun in hand.
That too has now become my part, alas!
But let us listen to his shot of words."

Book Third.

The Lower Cabinet.

The President.

Welcome, my fellow-craftsman of the States, what views and news do you bring me? You look intent upon somewhat—hit me with your cannon-ball of thought; you are a soldier bred, though now you take a peaceful part.

Postmaster General.

I confess I do not feel in fun to-day, nor am I much at peace with myself or with things in general.

The President.

I did not intend to hint that you were not in warlike mood. Let us hear.

Postmaster General.

I come again to urge upon you, Mr. President, the Proclamation calling for troops to put down this rebellion which has now started with such insolent audacity. You know I always held that we ought to have re-inforced Fort Sumter. You recollect that I said so in a communication to you some weeks ago. South Carolina is the leader in this conflict, and we must not shrink from her challenge.

The President.

Yes, that has been your consistent attitude, the force of which I always felt. But I had to be sure before I struck. There was one man needed for the side of the Union, about whom I did not feel certain. But now I have no doubts.

Postmaster General.

Who is that, if I may be allowed to make the inquiry?

The President.

It is Douglas. I knew that I had to have him first of all. He left me but a short time ago; I read him the draft of the Proclamation. He gave it not only his approval, but he offered his hearty co-operation. It will go forth to-morrow morning backed by my signature and also by his confirmatory word which is an appeal to his followers.

Postmaster General.

I would have gone ahead without him. He is tricky, you know; can you be sure of him now in his present mood?

The President.

I have indeed suspected him hitherto, but I defend him now, and trust him; I have learned something about him wholly unknown by me heretofore. I caught a glimpse of what lies deepest in him—which I never did during all the years I had known him. Strange, but I now for the first time consider that I understand Douglas.

Postmaster General.

But how about Seward, the man of peace and compromise? Also our Premier, if not to be our secret President? He thought he would end this conflict in ninety days, and seemed inclined to take into his own hands all dealings with those Southern Commissioners of separation.

The President.

Well, Seward is becoming my most ardent upholder; he has begun to show an attachment which is not merely dutiful but personal. At first he was, I grant, somewhat dominating and self-important. A very useful man; I need his keen mind, his learn-

ing, his knowledge of men and affairs. Then he sees turns in events that nobody else does.

Postmaster General.

That is a great conquest of yours. Seward at the start deemed himself the real Executive—and many others held the same view, having some contempt for the green Illinois sucker. So he set up to prescribe a policy of his own, even to carry it out. But we know that he was gently though firmly halted by the gloved hand of iron, for which his respect is growing. The general scope of that confidential letter of his to you leaked out, for he did not conceal its purport; his self-love would wag his tongue a little even to me. What answer he received from you we have all surmised from his changed behavior; but your lips seem paralyzed on that point.

The President.

He is my friend; I hope to retain him—an indispensable adviser in the present crisis. His aloofness is gone; he has become a kind of non-official comforter of mine—a person I much need.

Postmaster General.

I must congratulate you just here on having taken with success the first great step toward Union, the most direct step. You have unionized your Cab-

inet which seemed at the start enthroned dissen-tience. Four of its present members were your rivals in the Convention at Chicago which nominated you for President. Each of them naturally thinks that he should be in your place. I trembled lest that the very center of the Government, the President and his nearest advisors, would never cordially combine in unity; here just at the heart threatened to be the first and most dangerous Secession. But you have well asserted your Primacy, forecasting, I hope and believe, the Primacy of our political Union, which we are now getting ready to assert by arms. I can truly say that when I entered your Cabinet, I thought its composition perilous; it seemed a kind of powder magazine right here in the White House—and everybody handling fire.

The President.

Yes, I have been blamed for this as well as for everything else, and will be. I shall impart to you my most intimate thoughts on this point. The very strongest men, the supreme representatives of the People of the various loyal sections I had to take as my instruments for this decisive conflict of the Nation, and mould them into one organic body with its huge limbs, each of which is authoritative in its sphere, as a so-called department of Government. I felt that I could not avoid the test: I was to make

over into a common organism the separate greatest individuals of my party and bring them to work in harmony; I dared not leave them outside by themselves, where they would be certain to lapse into opposition; I must compel them to co-operate. If I were not strong enough to do that, I would be unequal to the situation at the start. I know the common prophecy that these members of my larger body were too big for me and would not obey, that they would fly asunder from the center, and that the first Disunion would be in the Union's Cabinet. The matter is not fully settled yet. I doubtless have one or two dissatisfied associates—I think I know who they are, and the bent they will take. Still I hope to carry you all along in a general harmony, notwithstanding individual diversities, which make you a set of strong characters. If you were all just like me you would be a band of non-entities. I would not deem myself equal to my position unless I could hold together powerful but differing natures in our common work which is big enough for us all. Still, that which peculiarly gratifies me at present is that I have not only unified my own party but the opposite party, that of Douglas, with our cause.

Postmaster General.

Why do you put so much stress upon him just now? And why so needful his co-operation? But

above all, why so certain of the certainty of him—just him the uncertain?

The President.

Your opinion is what mine was for many years. But I now know that I saw only the outside of him, I never penetrated to the center of the man, to his creative conviction. I shall tell you. Douglas is at this moment the pivot of the whole conflict—he is the only man who can unite the North and divide the South; that I deem the prime condition of any future success. Think of him: he is the most important man in America to-day, with altogether the largest personal following; I hold him to be the central personality in our Nation's destiny at the present conjuncture, more central than I am, the President himself, who defeated him at the polls. Yet he has come to me voluntarily and placed himself and his influence at the service of the Union; yea he has enlisted personally under me as leader, and I have sent him on the most important duty.

Postmaster General.

All that is very appreciative of your recent antagonist, but you have changed your opinion of him not a little. I hope you are justified. I recognize that men and circumstances are shifting very rapidly just now. The turn of the wheel dizzies me and everybody.

The President.

Of course I am speaking of this day's trend of history; to-morrow the situation may be different. Still I have the dominant conviction that my turn will come. But we all are agents in the work of a higher mind which has its pole star hardly visible to us just now. Still I am watching for it eagerly.

Postmaster General.

Well, that is a new strain in your nature which I have never noted before. And that mind also you must consult as our supreme leader. Have you any communication?

The President.

You might not understand it if I could tell. Still so much I dare confess: above me, above my Cabinet and my party, above both the North and the South, there is a Will at work with His plan, of which I would like to know somewhat and which I often interrogate in my own imperfect way. What have the Powers in mind by all this trouble—what do they mean by defeat, yea by victory? It is another set of advisers whom I have to consult and whose decree I fain would hear amid all this tumult of human deeds and purposes. Our conflict is not ours alone, but all time's—a link in the chain which reaches from past to future, a node of the World's History. And there is a universal overseer giving

directions in his mysterious hieroglyphics called events, hard to decipher. Still, I think I sometimes catch his far-off voice which I would re-speak or re-interpret to my people and to my age. Pardon my fantasy, but even his shape has fleeted before me in revery or dreams; oftener there appears one of his ministering messengers. So you see I have a President above the President, and even a Cabinet above the Cabinet.

Postmaster General.

Now you are out of my reach—I am not a member there. Business calls me down. I must be off to meet the earth again, which is a busy speck for us all at present.

The President.

It is enough for once, perhaps too much. In this time of war may peace caress you on your daily lines.

Book Fourth.

The Upper Cabinet.

The minister of State had gone his way
When Lincoln dropped again upon his couch,
And never seemed to stop till he sank down
Into the lowest depths of consciousness,
Where the old soul re-bears itself anew
And dips afresh into Creation's font.
Then of a sudden he looked up and saw
Himself as double flit by stealthily
And mope about in silent salutation.
His duplicated self appeared to him
As he had once beheld it rise at Springfield,
Before his journey to the Capital.
He much had mused at its significance,
Deeming it but his superstition's shade,

Or witch-work of his melancholy spun,
The mere abuse of troubled fantasy.
But here it comes again, a double *I am*,
And the twin shapes distinct, yet likenesses,
Seem of a different constitution :
The one shows vigorous and full of life,
Ready to grip the task with clutch of Will ;
The other shadowy and vanishing
As if it would pass to the realm beyond,
A member of that Upper Cabinet.
So Lincoln gazed upon himself twofold :
Belonging here, most real of flesh and blood,
Yet too a dweller of the world ideal
Amid the spirit sway of essences.
The underself stood by in nature's frame
And stared eye-bulged in mortal wonderment ;
Yet in his semblance rose before him there
The overself as ghostly counterpart
Until it faded with a fraying look
At him into the spectre-haunted air.
Lincoln sprang up and walked across the room,
“I know me doomed to die by violence !”
He uttered slowly to his measured gait
And then went on reflecting to himself :

“There is a Presence in this White-House here
Which sheds an influence about my steps
Distinctive in its ghostly character.

Although some shy familiars bodiless
I long have known to dart into my life
At moments when I least expected them,
This Presence seems to dwell about the place,
And never wholly quits these premises
As if he held this mansion by own right,
Installed just here in sovereign residence.
He acts as he would stay and supervise
The present broil which is his interest;
Methinks he has enlisted for the war,
And holds his hand on the machinery
Whose clock-work of events times History.
He oft gives me the impress of his view
Of what is coming in this woful strife,
And breathes suggestion voiceless on my soul,
Though once he tapped my ear-drum with a word
Of spirit syllables ruffling the air.

He seems at times to play the messenger,
And bring the one I need and most desire,
Or somehow move the man to bring himself
By touching inner springs unwatched of us
Which drive the soul to seek its symmetry.
How deeply longed I in my heart for Douglas,
Then felt that he was speeding on his way
When he appeared in a fulfillment sudden
To be my spirit's very counterpart,
And yet expected in my soul of presage!

He felt it too, the unconscious pull—
So much he intimated in his talk—
And hastened to obey the Power's edict.
What was it that impressed him hitherward,
And bade me feel that he was on his way
Until I super-sensed him at my sill ?
I oft am led to query with myself :
Who is it living here in this old mansion ?
I and my family—but who indwells besides ?
Who is this House's higher resident ?
Six weeks or so have gone since I came in,
Already then I found an occupant—
Yea, occupants—more than the one alone,
Without my knowing what at first they were.
Those Presences would flit with messages,
Impressions sent of what was distant from me
In place or time, yet most significant,
And traversing all my expectancy.
They make my other world of agencies,
And I must know them better than I do,
Find out what is their function and their order.
For they are ranked in duties organized ;
A kind of hierarchy I have marked
Methinks among their airy services.
Even I would control them somewhat, too,
At least have skill to summon them for help
When I would have a hint of the decrees
Hid in the bosom of Supernal Powers,

For whom at last I wield my human will.
And thus to school I have to go again,
Learning how I may tap that overworld
In which those Presences abide and act,
That I may bid them tell me what I need,
And teach me ways of discipline divine,
Man's dues of individuality.

Two sets of tenants then, dwell with me here
In this weird White-House—the unseen and seen,
The uninvited guests and the invited,
The right possessors and possessed perchance;
Aye, ever since that day I entered it
I felt already it and me possessed
By something of a higher majesty.
This is for me, I deem, a haunted House
Whose spirits I must know and treat with love,
I must not shun them here, or be afraid
Of semblances, though supersensible,
But cultivate their friendship and their ways
For sake of intercourse; what they impart
May be of weighty import to me in my task,
For which I seek suggestion everywhere.
But the last guidance I shall hope to win
From guider of the Universe itself.

Yet I must keep this upper world concealed
From the gross gazes of my visitors

Lest men may think I hold forbidden rites,
Invoking the dark powers of evil,
Perchance compacting with the fiend himself
To reach the goal of Heaven by road of Hell.
Or if not that, I shall be held in scorn
By those who claim themselves illuminated
With science torching now our time advanced,
And looked down on from its disdainful perch
As victim of my superstitious dread,
Which terrorizes weaker men to faith
And toys with Godship lost upon our planet.
Still of one fact I have become convinced,
Two sets I own of my advisers here
Who sit with me in weighty consultation :
The one I never did appoint—it came
Without my knowledge of its home, and stays,
For I am not its master or its sender.
The other I selected by my will,
A group of mortal men and visible,
Over whose acts I have the potency
As President, but mortal too, I feel.
So these two strands keep weaving through my life,
An upper and a lower I shall name them ;
The one of record and in public print,
Whose sounds go flying daily round the earth ;
The other runs unuttered of its share,
The deeper current, silent in my deeds,
Whose sole apocalypse is Time's forged word.

And yet I often have to speak it out
For my relief, which lips will sometimes give,
But I must tell my discourse to myself,
And with soliloquies my heart disburden ;
Or when my inner stress becomes too strong
I run to let me overflow Ward Lamon,
My soul-deep friend whom I have hither brought
To guard me outwardly and lift me inwardly.
O Douglas, thou dost come again to me
In images foreseen of sleep and dream—
Foreshadowing thy day of destiny !
Ah me ! thy lot is happier than mine !
Stricken at height of thy supremacy,
In the transfigured glow of highest deed !
But I must lead henceforth a wayworn life
Impoverished of all success and peace,
Abused of foes, unrecognized of friends,
But when my work and worth win recognition,
No longer here I shall be to receive it.

Two Cabinets are mine, which meet in me
And through me join in one vast common purpose ;
The upper one me calls and comes unbidden ;
The lower one I bid into my presence.
Well, here it is and I must talk with it,
Offering this written document
Which is to turn a page of history
Unless time's drift I much miscalculate.”

Book Fifth.

The First Proclamation.

Attorney General.

I observe, Mr. President, in your hands a written instrument which I take to be of great import. As I am your law officer I would like to glance over it and see whether it be bomb-proof. If it be a call for troops, you are aware that heavy explosives will be hurled at it by the lawyers.

The President.

I know the class somewhat, I am one myself, and have expected their attack. But I have followed the indications which you gave me in a recent interview. That old statute dug up from the year 1795 we have followed to the letter, and complied with its requirements, though they cramped us somewhat.

Still we shall doubtless get the relief when Congress assembles which is called to meet on the coming Fourth of July, Our Nation's birthday.

Secretary of the Navy.

Possibly the day of its re-birth—there is need of its regeneration. A little faith may see it coming. And yet this second parturition may be as painful as the first.

Attorney General.

The document is legal, and rightly worded. We must sail on the old lines even to a new port. But how suggestive! That statute empowering the President to suppress rebellion was enacted in the time of George Washington of Virginia. He was to enforce it against even his beloved State in case of revolt. At present Virginia says No to it, but I, sprung of Virginians, am inclined to say Yes.

The President.

I have often thought about what you speak of during the past month. It may seem my egotism, but I cannot help seeing Washington in my place, and asking what he would have done in the present contingency. My forefathers, too, came from Virginia, and in the family I have always heard of that State and its glory. But it has long been in a conflict with itself between the two rights, that of

Union and of Secession. So it hangs tetering now in its Convention, and I have been waiting and even trying to steady it, yet to no purpose. It still teters, and loves just that condition—but with this Proclamation it must cease its balancing, it will have to drop on one side or the other, or probably it will fall asunder on both sides. Do you know I feel that my chief struggle is with Virginia—her influence, her history, her very person.

Attorney General.

I have hunted up and read again the Resolutions of 1798, attributed to Jefferson which declare that each State is the final judge of the powers delegated to the General Government, as well as of the infractions committed by the same, and even of the mode and measure of redress. How true is that of Virginia now, her very soul at this moment, yet with strong protests against the doctrine also! It contains the germ of all this secession fostered by Virginia leadership both in thought and in action.

The President.

Undoubtedly. I have been studying not only the law of the case, but something deeper: that Virginia consciousness which cannot transcend its limit and rise into the vision of the Nation with the most of us. Indeed the whole South seems honestly to believe that the State alone is the true guardian of

liberty, while all the States together in their united government must be its foe. On the other hand the North, or especially the new North-West, holds emphatically the conviction that the total Union will preserve freedom better and more mightily than the single State. These two opposing political thoughts have now appealed to the trial of battle—here is the challenge, very unwillingly sent forth in this Proclamation. Strange, but Jefferson had this same limitation stamped on his political soul, so had Madison, so too the Virginia leaders since then, who have been ossified in this same fixed mental boundary, like Fate itself. But there was one greatest exception—that was George Washington.

Attorney General.

Hold, there was another exception very great, also from Virginia, Chief-Judge of the United States, John Marshall. In his case too I have been looking up the precedents in the Reports of the Supreme Court, and find that he fought legally just this battle between Union and Disunion in the early years of the present century, and won the fight even against Jefferson and other Virginians. He vindicated the right of the Federal Judiciary to pass upon the constitutionality of State laws, and of decisions by State judges. So the legal war for the Union was waged long in advance of this war of guns—may we be as successful as John Marshall!

Secretary of the Navy.

Dear me! You Virginians can only think of Virginia and legality. You all seem closely fenced about by the written enactment. But I tell you there is another law, that inscribed on the human heart, more enduring and mightier than what you scribble on a piece of paper. That is the law we obey and propagate up in New England, the moral law. Our mouthpieces are not the lawyers, but the ministers of the Gospel; they have already had something to say in this struggle, and they will be heard again before it is over.

The President.

Good! I am always glad to hear from our Heaven-born Yankee constituency, and certainly they are not to be left out. I share in their belief, especially on the subject of slavery. The moral view is also mine, but it must not try to make itself tyrannically the only one, else John Brown rises to the surface.

Secretary of the Interior.

Since this talk has gotten a little sectional, I may be permitted to put in a word for my section. I have often noticed that when the Virginian breaks loose from his fatal sod, crosses the Alleghenies and breathes the free air of the West, he undergoes a transformation: he cleaves his State fetters and

turns national in the best sense. He seems unable to do that on this side of the mountains. He must quit the old colony with its diseased dualism, must come out to us and get healed, then he can return and possibly bring along the medicine to cure the trouble here, though it be of long standing, veritably chronic.

The President.

That would be a good political speech out in your State of Indiana, but in these parts the Virginians would call it clap-trap if they were genteel; if not, they have for it worse names, as they have for me. But something of what you say appears to be already in the course of fulfilment; a number of us Western Virginians have come back to the good old graying mother who is not in happy sorts at our arrival. Still our purpose is to stay awhile. Wonderful old lady! altogether the greatest of those colonial mothers, more prolific of State children and of lofty political characters than any other one of the ancient set here along the Atlantic coast. I confess my love for her illustrious men and for her in person. I wish she could be present with us now.

But here comes the New Yorker, another ingredient in our national melting-pot. By his looks he has some big idea ready to burst into that lofty rhetoric of his, in which the muse of History sits entrancing us with her display of rich vestments.

Come, Mr. Secretary, let the fountains spout some rainbows.

Secretary of State.

(Entering.) I am agreed—nothing is left to us but war, all my efforts at conciliation have failed. The call for troops must now be issued, and with it the assertion of the Nation's sovereignty. As to me, I sought to waive the test, I tried to shun in word and deed the coercion of a State, so offensive even to the Southern Unionists; but a mightier Volition has otherwise decreed and forced the issue in spite of us. South Carolina is, I hold, the unwilling instrument of the World's History; it is compelling the Union's authority, even while defying the same; it is bringing about just the opposite of what it intends. It is going to lose just what it has taken arms to secure—State Sovereignty; indeed I predict that its method of defending slavery is what will destroy the same. Lincoln, I love to see the irony of History at play, it is as good as your humor. Indeed Providence is the supreme historic humorist, often with an ironical twist in those dealings of his called events.

The President.

Yes, we shall have to vindicate the South against itself, against the logic of its own deed, which simply tears it to pieces. It has already formed a union with the right of secession in it—with the

right of any single State to break it up at will, or rather at caprice. This State caprice is what must now be eliminated from our political system. Surely I am defending the South against itself, if it could only see calmly what it is doing. The Primacy of our Union I have first truly uttered in the Proclamation ; next it must be enforced by arms ; finally I think it will have to be put into our organic instrument, the Constitution. This will then be the new Constitution of the new Nation.

Secretary of State.

Yes, that Proclamation, it means much. It is the first push of a great new epoch ; it proclaims the majesty of the Nation, not of the personal ruler or king. Let me hear it again, while the other members are coming in, at least the first paragraphs.

The President.

I am glad to re-read it and to re-think it too—the first real move toward a re-united country.

“Whereas the Laws of the United States have been for some time past and are now being opposed, and the execution thereof obstructed in the States of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, by combinations too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings, or by the powers vested in the marshals by law :

“Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, in virtue of the power vested in me by the Constitution and the Laws, have thought fit to call forth, and do hereby call forth the militia of the several States of the Union, to the aggregate number of seventy-five thousand, in order to suppress said combination and to cause the Laws to be duly executed.

“I appeal to all loyal citizens to favor, facilitate, and aid this effort to maintain the honor, the integrity, and the existence of our National Union, and the perpetuity of popular government; and to redress the wrongs already long enough endured.”

Secretary of State.

With what a whole-hearted uplift I shall haste to affix my hand and seal to that instrument which for the first time in our history, means Nationality! Firm as adamant, yet calm in tone, it heralds the incoming order—the Primacy of the Union. Mr. President, in your Inaugural I recollect that you uttered the principle; but here you take a colossal stride forward; you advance like a giant to the execution. This Proclamation I hold to be the grand test of our new Nation; the issue is drawn clear, the long uncertainty and dubitation about our new existence must at once end.

But now comes the question: will the People re-

spond? Are they ready to make the sacrifice? Have they the will to nationalize themselves, though it cost blood, treasure, precious lives? And this is to be not merely a Nation of the old separated European sort, but the new federated Union, the next great stage, I believe, in the World's History. Can we advance and grasp the fresh inheritance of the ages? This Proclamation says that we can, we must. But the South, through the doctrine of secession, tends to lapse backward to Europe with its political separation, to recur to a group of ever-clashing jealous States grinding horribly on their boundaries. We must transcend all our fatherlands across the water in just that—so I read the Proclamation before us. And it seems by the already thunderous response of the People from every side overflowing this Capital that they are getting ready to march. But here comes the man in whose office all this tramp and shout of soldiery centers: let us hear his report.

Secretary of War.

(Enters.) What! am I the last! All here but one, the Secretary of the Treasury. I could hardly pull myself away from the overwhelming rush at my headquarters—the offers of men from all the Northern States, the solicitations of volunteers to be accepted, the requests for arms, with thousands

of other details. The war spirit is seething East and West—it threatens to get uncontrollable. That attack on Sumter has stirred up the People from the bottom. They are asking for the Proclamation in advance; it cannot be issued too soon; already their souls are marching on, and impatiently wait for their bodies to follow.

The President.

So we have begun to feel ourselves a Nation; we must now will ourselves to be one. But it is sad; our own South draws the limit which we have to pass over through war in order to reach our true destiny and also theirs. Our Capital is surrounded by rebellion; half the faces on the street are unfriendly; this city must first be nationalized; the States not yet seceded must soon align themselves on one side or the other. I have long seen that Virginia will respond to such a Proclamation as this by secession; she claims to be for the Union, but her unionism must be transformed. If she could dictate to the Government, she would stay; if she could subordinate the Union, she would help preserve it; she might even favor its sovereignty if she could be the Sovereign. But this Proclamation commands her to put herself down—which she will not do, I fear, though very needful for her own happiness, yea for her salvation. That

line between North and South, it divides my heart; still I shall have to cut it, though it let my own blood.

Secretary of State.

Cheer up, Mr. President, this Nation is not tragic, not fated, though the individual may be, perchance many individuals. Our people are now fusing together in the white-hot furnace of patriotism; they are showing that inner union of spirit which is to make our political Union. For months they have been brooding, smouldering in a kind of dubitation, but now behold the outbreak of the flames. Indeed for some seventy years there has been a continued see-saw over the point of sovereignty—where is it seated, in the member or in the Whole? Your Proclamation not only announces but commands with the voice of the Nation heard authoritatively now for the first time, since after all, in Andrew Jackson's episode, the matter was left uncertain, and settled by an unsettling compromise, which simply turned the crisis over to us. The age is calling for a new unity by obliterating the old separation in space; really this Capital is now nearer to your home at Springfield than it was to Richmond in the time of George Washington. Distance made our first government weak of necessity; but the railroad and the telegraph have long unionized Nature herself, of whom we

are the children, and we must take the inheritance of the parent. Then the ever-present newspaper has unified our North in spirit, making it fundamentally of one mind; so cheer up, Mr. President, we have enlisted on our side the two stoutest soldiers of all time, called Nature and Spirit.

The President.

Excellent! those are the best recruits, and I shall put you in command to summon them when we wish to inspect them. Still, like all soldiers, they must be paid, and here comes our missing member, the paymaster himself.

Secretary of the Treasury.

(Enters.) Your pardon, gentlemen, but I have been delayed by an effort to get a little money for meeting the immediate needs of the Government. A difficult task to raise funds where no credit exists.

But let me first speak out what is uppermost in my heart: we ought to strike now at the root of the trouble, slavery. Why should we longer tamper with that servile institution? I tell you, I do not want a Union restored with a slave in it.

The President.

The Union is first with me, in accord with my oath, and still more in accord with my conviction. The Union undone means slavery preserved, but the Union preserved may mean slavery undone,

though I cannot say so at present. Mr. Secretary, I shall tell you how I look at the lowering situation. We cannot win unless we unite our own side, which is now inclined to split up into three parties. First are the strong anti-slavery people, found everywhere, but especially in New England, whose hate of slavery seems greater than the love of the Union; still they must be kept in line. Second are distinctively the anti-slavery unionists, to whom I have belonged with the bulk of the North-West; in our case the Union is first and the slavery question subordinate, though very important. But the third party I may call the pro-slavery unionists, the bulk of the people of the border States, who are now the pivot of the war; without them we cannot succeed. They will fight for the Union with slavery untouched at the start—but time may train them to see that they must give up the one or the other, perhaps the one for the other. We must wait till then. But if they once are in the fight, they will stay in—that is the only way to win both stakes, the preservation of the Union as well as the abolition of slavery. But let us watch the turn of the wheel—it may get to whizzing very rapidly.

Hark! the newsboy's shout! What does he say! Virginia going out, gone! And getting ready to fight! With her is the grand conflict for supremacy! Let us adjourn to listen to the news—and to our own souls.

Book Sixth.

Mother Virginia.

Lincoln again had laid him on his couch,
The cushioned couch on which he kissed repose ;
And yet more than sweet rest he fain would woo,
He sought communion with his world above,
Round him to gather his Upper Cabinet,
If it would fleet perchance down to his side
When he might revery or drop adream.
So he lay listening to the mighty roar
Of the Oceanic people in its tempest
Tiding from Maine to San Francisco's bay
In high upheavals of its tossing heart
Beating his call to nationality :
When he was ware of a white figure's flit
Before him there mid clouds within the room :

Real or unreal—he could not tell at first—
It hovered somewhere on the borderland
And let him feel uncertain of himself,
Whether he too were not a shade as well.
Her woman's features had the lines of age,
But she was wrinkled more with haughty scowls
Than with Time's furrows on her haggard brow;
And yet beneath looked native graciousness
Which rippled still amid her hottest ire,
And in her self's despite stray streaks of love,
Would flash their lightning on her blackest clouds.
But all her vesture's flowing folds were blanched
Like marbled Goddess Greek to spotlessness,
And wreathed her form in a disdainful care
Bespeaking the aristocratic dame,
Whose art of dress is artless trance of art.
She crooked her bony finger's menace straight
At Lincoln as transfixing him with fate,
While from her frenzied eyes blazed rays of wrath
Which shot a fire-ball to the very soul,
With meteoric play on skiey blue.
The startled President upturned and stared,
Propping himself upon his elbow asked:
“Who art thou, stealthy ghost, slipping uncalled
Into my privacy while I am listening
With all my spirit's sense of far-away,
To the reverberations thunderous
Of this raged folk-soul echoing my words

Over the stretches of a continent
Entire from the Ocean's East to the Ocean's West?"
The word provoked the spectral woman's scorn
Yet more to maddened lightning from her look,
While she upstraightened high her age's stoop,
And stiffed her neck to austere loftiness
As she hissed out her haughtiest disdain:
"That shout plebeian venoms in my ear,
And stings me with the serpent's fang infernal
Until I pulse with vengeance of the fiend!
Yet my best warning I now bring to thee,
Remembering the work of my great sons;
And so I come, the old colonial mother,
Indeed the oldest on the Atlantic coast,
Mother of States, still throbbing love in me
Maternally, yea mother of this Union
Which now thou dost invite to strike me down,
And in my border civil strife hast brought,
Invoked my blood against my common weal,
To set thy people over me in rule.
Filial ingratitude! I feel it more
Than aged Lear upon the fabled scene;
My wrongs are real, not pictured for the stage,
Are present, not in distant time or place.
I hate—and still I love what I most hate."

Whereat streamed down the channels of her cheeks
The hottest rain of tearful indignation;

And yet almost too proud to be indignant,
With too much heart upheaving through her heat,
She turned away her look affectioned
Till somewhat calmed in mien and word she spoke:
“My blood is best of all the emigrants,
Whoever may have reached this Western world;
My deeds the greatest in its history,
My sons the highest in authority,
My daughters too of woman’s mould supreme,
The loveliest in love and ladyhood;
All mine are mannered, high-bred, gentle folk,
Forgetless aye of courtesy and chivalry.”
But through these words there rolled a raucous
shout,
Like a refrain discordant with their music,
The roar it rose of distant multitudes
Treading to angry beat of fife and drum
Or to shrill trumpets blaring some new doom,
So that this final sentence of her praise
Fell quenched just at the passage of her lips:
“My brain it is which still controls this land.”
Lincoln’s amazement was not yet becalmed
As he spake to himself more than to her:
“An order new seems to be heralded
Along the waves of that tumultuous shout
Whose lines keep concentrating on me here
To magistrate the coming sweep of time,
With its epiphany of great events.”

Then suddenly the ghostly head bent sidelings,
With novel scoff the nose was twirled on high,
While words responsive to her look shot out:
“Railsplitter, base-born story-telling clown,
The populace’s smattering demagogue
Whose trade is smear of words: You, You!
Successor of Virginia Presidents!
This generation’s rot instead of birth!
The rabble’s dregs upbelched to rule the State!
Descendent of my poorest human trash
Now risen from the lees up to the head,
You will make edicts for my Families!
Tremble, I bid you, at my queenly name
Baptized me at old Britain’s regal font,
Virginia—oft will it shiver you.”
And still the rumble multitudinous
Would intermingle swallowing her voice
In spite of all its screaming wealth of tones
Which shrilled the air with sudden stabs.

The kindly Lincoln reared himself upright
Saluting that hoar presence venerated
By him in memory affectionate:
“Full-hearted I do welcome thee, Virginia,
In hope just now I turn my look to thee
With childhood’s early love and reverence;
The source incentred of me too thou art—
Thy sons have taught the lore I know of State,

Instilled me with their soul of institutions,
And I would not of thee be all disowned ;
My father was erst cradled on thy hills,
My father's father also with their kin ;
Myself an infant nestled in the bosom
Of kind Kentucky, eldest daughter thine,
Whom still I love as homing me and mother.
So much of pride in pedigree I take
Airing a word on my Virginia blood,
Wherein I find me of first company.
But in response unto thy soror challenge,
Let me vow here, on thee I shall not war,
Unless thou mak'st alliance with rebellion
And dar'st assail what is so largely thine
By birth and by thy mothering care—this Union.”

The spectral lips paled to a deathlier ash,
And quivered in a fiercer utterance,
Which tuned the White-House to a woman's shriek :
“Take back that Proclamation—obey my biddance—
Revoke the call to arms against the South,
My people whom I come to represent,
For you have forced their cause to be now mine.
If not, tomorrow you shall see me cleave
This bond of States into a thousand fragments
Although it be of me the fosterling ;
I swear me here, I shall dash out the brains

Of this by you perverted polity
E'en if it be the childed darling of my heart,
Beneath a mother's curse flung down to death."'
Whereat applaudive echoes from afar
Mumbled as from the Gulf of Mexico.
The President looked all his sorrow's soul
To see maternity's demonic spell
Which made the womb destroyer of its own.
For Abraham Lincoln loved Virginia,
And longed to hinder her self-murderous deed
Which, aimed in pride to hit the Nation's heart,
Most bloodily turned back upon herself.
But still the phantom had more wrath to voice:
"Revoke that Proclamation and at once!
With an apology let it be done!
Lest in the whirling moment I shall join
The South's Confederacy newly born,
And lead its heroes to the battle's test
For rights assailed which I now vindicate.
Tyrant, to you I shall not subject bow
My neck unyoked to other sovereignty,
Or to the Nation which you glorify;
I am the Sovereign, I am the State
And shall not knee the earth to mine own offspring,
Supremacy surrender I shall not.
And now I shall again command as lord,
Giving to you the last alternative:
Take back that call to war—obey or perish."

Then underneath the phantom's eerie shriek
Resounded from afar defiant shouts
With echoing tramp of marching soldiery,
That shook the land in shocks of repercussion.

But Lincoln still more gently toned his tongue
As he dropped limply down upon his seat,
Unwilling he to stand upright in pride
Even against the proudest of the proud:
"So thou, grandmother, art to dictate now
To me, the President, lately arrived
With the new Nation at its Capital!
I am elect to sway authority,
The folk has chosen me to be its will,
That choice I know not how to abdicate
Though my dictator may the wiser be.
Dear gentlewoman, well I ken thy fame,
The record of thy worth I oft have conned,
I linger over thy past potencies,
And thrill perusing thy high history,
Dreaming myself beside thy Presidents;
Of these United States I hold thee best,
Hast reared the greatest men in war and peace,
The builders early of the Nation's temple,
Constructive geniuses of institutions.
Thy glory would I never seek to dim,
It is my own and all the people's too,
Still we must not becloud our honor's sheen

But save it even for the sake of thee.
If I should dare obey thy spoken wish,
I would undo thy greatest, noblest deed.”

The sootheing word was but an added brand
To that hot furnace of her kindled soul;
The untoward specter clenched her tiny hand
Her delicate white hand unused to toil,
And thrust it up alongside Lincoln’s knuckles,
Big-boned and brawned, unflinching in their clutch,
The ready implement of Westerner,
And telling token of his character,
But now unfisted in their peaceful power,
E’en stretched out to persuasive gentleness.
But mid an eldritch scream she smote the air
With her soft slender fingers doubled over
Into a downy knot caressing hate:
“I care not for your mincing flatteries,
Not for your patronizing airs of office—
Take back that Proclamation—eat your words!
Else by this fist they down your throat be rammed.”
Whereat she whizzed it round his dark-knit brow,
Yet stopped it suddenly as if held back
By some compunction still at work within,
Which tried a little tilt of far-down love
Against the syllables of her own voice.
Then Lincoln strode to center of the room,
And took position square before the ghost

Wording the bubbles of his upstirred deeps:
“Dear Madam, know that a new epoch dawns
With throes of bearing a new kind of State
For domination of the rising ages;
And now I come the representative
Of States free-born and childed of the Union
Determined that this country hence shall be
A Nation whole with its authority.
I am their hand, their head, aye too their heart
Upheaving with a star-high aspiration,
And tuning to a music cosmical,
Of which the upper world hymns me the strain.
I never shall betray their hopes and mine,
We ask no more of thee than what is duty,
Than what ourselves perform just in this act
Which has thy scorn—submission to the Nation.”

Again there fell upon his words a rune
Of far-off rhyming with reverberation,
Whereat he took a turn around the shade,
Which left his muscles laxer in his look,
So that they bended to a ripple of his humor:
“We cannot wholly for all time be ruled
By our good grandams, though we love them much;
We seem to them unruly boys at school
When we unnoosed begin to rule ourselves;
Still we cannot give up self-government.”
Such a bold sauce-box claiming what was hers

The ancient lady had not met for all her years;
In wroth-red majesty about the room
She paced her footsteps, as if young again
When she bore Presidents of dignity
Very unlike this prairie favorite,
As she looked on him with disdain antique.
Writhing her face to furrowed sneers she scoffed
him :

“Chief magistrate of Western impudence !
A daddy-long-legs for our President !
Once more, the last time, I shall bid you here
Revoke that call to arms against my South,
Else I shall curse you and depart for home.
Assembled my convention now awaits me,
Again and yet again our vote has been to stay
In this old crackling edifice of Union
Already crumbling down upon our heads ;
But only shall we stay with this proviso
That you coerce not States which have gone out ;
They had the right to leave, although they ought
Not to have left, I grant ; they did a wrong
Which they, however, had the right to do ;
Hear then, unless you as the President
Over this Nation, as you choose to call it,
Unless you follow now my admonition,
I, quitting here your presence, shall go back
And say our only freedom is to secede,
Though I believe not in secession.

And I proclaim my Unionism dies,
Yea, will rise out its grave to fight you here,
If you shall dare maintain the Union.''
She stepped aback at hearing her own speech
As if she felt in it the harsh discordance,
And looked a protest quite unconsciously
Against herself all in despite herself.

Lincoln sprang forth and pitched his voice anew
In firmest key as he spake out his heart:
"So perish now, the word and thing, coercion!
That is the monster which is booked to die,
Torn from its den within your consciousness—
The den of your own self-born dragon's woe.
But the sore point, the sorest, you have touched;
From your Convention in the Capital
At Richmond has been brought me but dictation,
What I and the whole People have to do,
Namely, undo their will as some great crime,
The will of our law's own majority
Voiced at the polls last fall by count of votes.
So then defeat must rule the victory,
The fewer lord it over all the rest,
Prescribing what shall be my policy.
Although you shake the rod above my head
In spirit of your haughty domination,
I shall not yield our government's own soul
To petty threat of any member, not to yours.

That Unionism which subjects the Union
To its caprice, must be made over new
And I shall do it—I the chosen man
For just that task now born. Autocracy
Of the one State, we shall as little suffer
As that of the one man—king, emperor—
Nor of Dictator, civil or military,
Nay, not of me, the President. And hence
My Proclamation I shall not recall,
Which o'er you crowns the Nation sovereign.
Go out then, if you will—a President
I would not be, if, ruling, you stay in.”

Louder than ever was heard the repercussion
Of the far-shouting Folk-soul mid these words;
But on the other side yelled rivalry—
Both seemed as two vast amphitheaters
Opposed, of North and South from Ocean to Ocean,
And shaken with a tumult millionfold.
Virginia rose up equal to her vengeance
And flashed her speech into stern Lincoln's face:
“What! I submit to your authority!
I yield to you my Statehood's primal right
Of sovereignty which won our independence!
And crouch before the Nation which I made!
Rather let frantic war plough up my soil
With cannon-balls and sow destruction's seed
Till earth gulps down the blood of my best sons!

Expect them soon, my armies marching hither
To bivouac in your humbled Capitol,
Dictating thence the victor's terms of peace.
How I shall gloat to watch yon haughty dome
Enshrouded in my gunnery's wreaths of smoke!
I see me heading my brave soldiery
In solid tread along the Avenue,
To roll of drum and martial shout of triumph;
And then I hear me giving my commands
To you as President just in this room,
Just here. Again Virginia as of yore
Shall be installed the ruler in this White-House.
With power restored and greater than before
For she was born to have supremacy.
The crown of first authority I feel
Grow on my head again as I pass out."

A little note of hesitation here
She gasped as startled at what she had said;
But not so soon could she lay down her wrath
And ban her temper's storm imperious
Bursting to fiery cannonade of speech:
"My Capitol shall not be citied here
But soon transferred to its own rightful seat,
My high-born Richmond on the river James;
There shortly will appear another White-House
And in it a new President will dwell,
Coming out of the farther South to us,

Your rival, yea your ruler reared by war
Which smites in vengeance for your Proclamation ;
Begotten then will be the Nation true
With last but loftiest place in History.”
And then she paused as if to take a look
Surprised at her own picture of herself.

“Just that is what I too believe,” said Lincoln
Thrusting his words upon the specter’s tongue,
Then throbbed a bass-note fateful in reply :
“Farewell this time—it is enough for once,
But mark—I shall thee see again in Richmond.
I shall be there e’en as thy President,
And take my seat upon thy chair of State,
Wielding from thence supreme authority
When the high work of Union is fulfilled.
Perchance thou wilt me then the honor show
Of a fresh visit in thy Capital.”

She whispered on the air a bodelement low
Which bore the tone of doomful prophecy :
“Whenever humble I shall come to you,
And bow the knee unto your Union won,
That is your Fate—your days are numbered few
Beyond that moment’s mortal sunstroke dialed.”
The presage touched to a responsive thrill
The deepest chord of Lincoln’s tense-strung heart,
For he forefelt the same prophetic throb
Which now he heard that ghostly mouth intone

To airy speech, yet weighed with destiny.
They stood apart in mute astonishment,
Each eyed the other with a glance appalled
In some deep vision tongueless, overawed,
When both were ware of a vast Presence winged
Around, above, and everywhere at home;
It seemed to fill the room, the house, the world,
To wield the lordship over place and time,
To ride upon the ages as its car
Which it was driving to some far-off goal,
Onbearing both these shapes, Virginia's shade
And the real Lincoln too, as tiny motes,
Active within its universal action.
But see Virginia's still defiant look—
Denying e'en that Omnipresence too
She turned on it away from Lincoln, saying
“I shall not be coerced by such a ghost,
Although the Spirit of the Age itself
It comes to me demanding my submission.”
Whereat she scowled at it her loftiest dare,
Ready to challenge that supernal Presence,
As if her harnessed enemy for battle.

But Lincoln took another attitude,
Treating it as his friend familiar
Whom he would cherish in his heart and brain:
“Spirit, I oft have glimpsed you here before:
Welcome, take up with me your fixed abode—

For I would know your will above all else,
And would consult you in my heavy task;
Be mate to me and tell me your decree
Which I would follow with true loyalty
And win the people also to your hest,
When I may know it well enough to tell.”

The Presence darted forth a spectral hand
And drew a line between the glaring twain
Who face to face had taken their position—
A red-lit line which neither then could cross
It rose dividing the two Capitals,
And separating North and South by fire
Which blazed each way enwrapping both in flames
Till it had wrecked in twain Virginia
Whose voice responsive fell to broken words
Which told at last her soul’s confession:
“How deeply do I feel myself divided!
All is to me in scission and secession!
Twofold my self, my people, and my State!
As well as States born of me in the West!
And oh! my love itself is cut in two,
Each side is warring with its other self!
My sons are drawn up now in ranks opposing
And soon will let each other’s blood in strife.
See there! the ensanguined line of separation—
The Fatal Line dividing me and mine!”

Whereat she fleeted off outside the White-House,
And vanished soon behind the bound of fire
Which seemed to crimson all its line in blood.
The greater Presence had transformed itself,
Becoming strangely one with Lincoln's semblance
Just as he, after trials numerous,
Advanced across that parting line aflame
Which slowly drooped to monumental ashes.

And so Virginia in her wrath defied
The omnipresent might which has to rule
Within the outer loud occurrences
Upseething on the stream of history:
Even to that her pride disdained submission.
But Lincoln tacked his course the other way:
He sought to know the Mind which is the Whole,
Even to ken the Will which wills all Will,
To find its goal e'en in misfortune's blows,
And recognize the discipline divine,
As guidance to his deeper work ordained.
So he would court the Spirit of the Time
Communing with its ghostly Presences
That he might catch their tongueless utterance,
Whether it spelt defeat or victory.
This higher message he would then impart,
In his own way of wording what he saw,
In spoken speech or written document,
Unto the folk who had to know it too,

Whose mighty travail was to turn to fact
The mandates of that Upper Cabinet.

The weird appearances, now turned to air,
Had left on Lincoln's mood a mighty oracle:
Was it a dream or brain-born fantasy,
Though pressing solid as reality?
An overworld of forms descended on him,
And played some mimic prelude of a drama—
A scene of disembodied characters,
Hoar phantoms pre-enacting great events.
And still through all his sun-born imagery
Would stray a streak of doubt clouded as night,
Passing to melancholy nothingness.
At last his thought forced out this utterance:
“So then we are to have two Capitals
And two White-Houses on two rivers built,
Each glaring at the other from their perch,
Within their walls two hostile Presidents—
How that division twinges me to horror!
And yet the deeper darker doubleness
Cuts the two Peoples at the blood-red line!
That line is what my task is to erase
Completely and forever—I hear the call.”
Again flowed in upon his strong-willed words
A far-off shout as of the Folk itself
Between the seas upon the East and West
Responsive in a chorus to his thoughts.

When the strong-voiced rebound had died away
Into the distant wilderness of sounds,
Lincoln began to hear his soul's own echo
Foretelling his destiny in words:
“Between myself and thee, Virginia,
This combat of our Folk divided writhes
As if between two personalities.
I cast that I shall have to go myself
From here down to your second Capital,
And therein take my Presidential seat
If I now heal this fevered dualism
Which rages in the Nation, State, and Soul.
But when I come to thee, Virginia,
Thou also shalt enfranchised be;
I say it here unto myself foresaid:
When I return to my grandfather's State
Which storied lies from childhood in my heart,
And take my seat within her Capital,
She shall be new-born of the Union free,
Rejuvenated in her liberty.
And though my doom be there suspended o'er me,
As thou dost threat in frenzy sybilline,
Whereto my own prophetic soul nods yea,
So let it fall, I cannot stay its scope.
And then I shall revoke this Proclamation
When it revokes itself in its own triumph.
This call, I say, will then recall itself,
Undone by its fulfilment, O Virginia.”

Book Seventh.

Lee and Thomas.

Lee.

I am glad to see you, fellow Virginian and old comrade in arms. Welcome to Arlington, Colonel Thomas. You are now commander of the Second Cavalry.

Thomas.

My heart responds to your courtesy with quicker beats, my honored chief. But yours is a strange salute. I have just come from Carlile Barracks to confer with you as my official superior. How delightful are these grounds and their mansion embosomed in the trees whose tops are now throbbing out in a kind of smile the first leaves of April green! And some early flowers of spring twinkled at me on my way hither. Still I confess that I

appear before you oppressed and sorrowed by the clouds hanging over our country, and therewith over our Virginia. But tell me, why do you greet me with a military title which is not mine but yours?

Lee.

It is no longer mine. I have resigned the Colonelcy of the First Cavalry, and you are the ranking officer of your regiment. I cannot take part in any invasion of the South, whose rights are now assailed by President Lincoln's call for troops. And I tell you, Virginia will not permit any such assault upon her Southern sisters. And yet I do not think that they have done right—South Carolina has acted very precipitately, as if she would provoke the issue of arms.

Thomas.

I see that you are in a battle with yourself. So am I, or rather have been. But what about this rumor which I heard as I passed through Washington? It was reported that you were to take command of the Union army; I come to offer you my help, or at least my good wishes.

Lee.

Let me state you the main fact. A messenger, old Mr. Blair, brought to me the offer of some such

position from the President, as I understood the matter. And I believe that General Scott, who thinks well of my abilities, had thrown out a similar intimation. To be sure, Mr. Blair is very sly and not altogether open in his use of words. I felt that he was sounding me, and so I gave him the bluff refusal of the soldier. I could not yield my honest service to carry out the President's Proclamation, which grated the tenderest chords of my soul. And my State to whom I owe my last allegiance is sure to be involved. And you, you too are a Virginian.

Thomas.

Undoubtedly. I love the good old mother, but also love her greater child, the Nation.

Lee.

I have felt the same double heart-beat, but always in unison hitherto. But now the two beats strike counter so as to make unhappy discord within me. Two supreme events have taken place which jar me almost out of existence: the bombardment of Fort Sumter and Lincoln's call to violence in response. Both are unnecessary and extremes; the one assails the Union in which I believe and the other assails the State in which I believe. I am rent in twain by the two conflicting sides, for both are mine, inwound in my memories

and hopes; my exemplar and my relative, George Washington, they tear to pieces; and my own father, Light-Horse Harry as he is best known, lies bleeding with this mortal wound before me. My ancestry is cleft in the middle, so are all the great Virginians of history, who seem to groan in me with the throes of the present strife.

Thomas.

I understand your feeling, for I have shared in it. I often ask myself what underlies this mighty turmoil, this wrench of the spirit everywhere. Something must be coming out of it, perhaps a new order; at least it cannot all be for nothing. But what?

Lee.

If I had the four million slaves, I would give them all for the Union.

Thomas.

So would I. And if war comes, I believe that the Union will have to pay that price and probably a greater. If it is to be kept, it must have a new valuation.

Lee.

I never did believe in slavery, nor did the great Virginians of the past.

Thomas.

Nor do I. Still neither they nor we ever summoned our full strength to abolish it, and make valid our conviction. And it is certainly the source of the present split between North and South—the alien wedge prying apart the Union.

Lee.

But that late Proclamation assails the right of the State.

Thomas.

But it asserts preponderantly the right of the Union.

Lee.

Oh the pitiless time which forces me to choose the one or the other! Still for me the State is first and formed the Union.

Thomas.

Yes, the choice has to be made by every man—such is the age's behest. But for me the Union is first and forms the State.

Lee.

I see that you agree with Lincoln, but I must face the other way.

Thomas.

You will soon have to start. Here is the newspaper with big headlines on the first page. Vir-

ginia secedes. The dividing line is grooved already.

Lee.

I have been expecting it—the Richmond Convention said as much to Lincoln. Virginia could not do otherwise. I shall draw my sword only in defence of my native State—so I have resigned from the national army.

Thomas.

I shall not resign—I cannot—I shall draw my sword for the Union.

Lee.

Pardon me, my fellow-soldier, but I do not understand how a Virginian can take that course against all that he holds dear.

Thomas.

Permit me to say to you, my old commander, that there are two Virginias, mutually antagonistic, each now wrestling with the other. I see them both in you, your talk has uttered both; I know that both are in me, and have had quite a struggle; both even show themselves outwardly in the State's territory. I behold Virginia (and the whole South with her) at the cross-roads of her destiny; one way she turns back and reverts to the old colonial separation; the other way she

reaches forward to the new federation which is not to be stopped till it circles the earth.

Lee.

Indeed! I never dreamed of your being such a dreamer. Our hard-headed spare-worded Major Thomas has become such an enthusiast! Still, coming down to the bald fact, I say that the States made the Union and existed before it—so they are the first creatively.

Thomas.

That is true of the old Thirteen, Virginia included—but just the opposite holds true of the new Twenty States of the West—the Union made them, and they are now the decided majority—so the Union at present is the first creatively. Just that is what is next to be wrought out, and perchance to be fought out; in fact here lies the real meaning of the trouble, and the direction of its final settlement.

Lee.

I confess that I did not altogether like the spirit of the West with its upstarts, of whom I learned when stationed at St. Louis some years ago. The old Dominion with its long-descended heirlooms is more congenial to me. I shall not fight against my ancestral friends, my kindred, my traditions, my State.

Thomas.

In that lies the test. I too love friends, relatives, Virginia, the past. But my final allegiance is to the future with its higher goal. I have had the bitter struggle to give up what you will keep—I dare immolate old associations, friendships, consanguinities, my native State, for a greater cause, though all my relatives and companions and even Mother Virginia herself disown me. Still I grant that I have a rent inside me which makes me bleed, but which I shall bear around with me in silence. For my relief I must quit the presence of the contending forces here in the East.

Lee.

There will be a mortal grapple. My last news is that Virginia will follow up secession by uniting with the Southern Confederacy.

Thomas.

That forecasts a long war just at the gates of Washington.

Lee.

President Davis will be accepted by Virginia and bring his Capital to Richmond.

Thomas.

Then will open the desperate combat between the two Capitals hardly a hundred miles apart.

Lee.

Governor Letcher has already sent me intimations to come to Richmond and take charge of the military arm of the State. I judge you do not care to go along.

Thomas.

By no means. But I do not wish to stay here where I shall see Virginia cleft asunder, her people divided, her State ripped through, while I am torn within by her agony. Besides I would not like to be arrayed in battle-line against you, my old Colonel, friend, Virginian. I shall flee as soon as possible to the West, where there is no such chasm as here, or only in the distance. Though I be driven from the State, I shall not be driven from the Union.

Lee.

Here the States will subordinate the Union, and assert their own independent right of existence.

Thomas.

There the Union will subordinate the States—even the old ones. Besides I may frankly tell you that here on the Atlantic coast nothing can be settled; the decisive work in this conflict must be done in the West, by the young vigorous children of the Union, not in the East by the good old, but somewhat backward, parents of the Union.

Thither I shall go and take my part in the great national deed which I believe is to be done out there, where the line of separation in the Union is weak and can be more easily crossed. Here it is strong, perhaps too strong for me—I can feel it drawn in myself, I must flee from it; if I stay here in Virginia, I could fear myself. You say you did not like that rough-and-ready Western folk which we knew at Jefferson Barracks and elsewhere; I grew fond of it and learned from it much, for example to face about from East to West, even from Virginia toward the Rockies. And I was fascinated by the Mississippi with its tossing turbulent independence, which seems to repel you, and which you, as an engineer, sought to curb and direct with success. I tell you, there lies the new hope.

Lee.

Call me an old colonial, if you will, even a rebel—so was George Washington, who, you know, is in our family tree—a Virginia gentleman true-bred. And your Western Lincoln has small attraction for me; his blood is, I hear, of our Southern white trash—he is yonder in the White-House I suppose—I slipped away from the city rather than see him. I could not endure the contrast—it makes my heart ache. How different from our old Virginia line of Presidents!

Thomas.

But Lincoln also traces his descent from Virginia ancestors of Revolutionary stock. Therein at least he is like you and me. The difference is that he was baptized in the spirit of the West, and is a child of the great migration from the old to the new. Let me tell you something else: there are more Virginians and sons of Virginians in those young Western States than here in old Virginia herself. They have dared break ancient ties and start a new life of their own. And I should not wonder if they would be coming back this way some time. Lincoln, their representative, is already here, and in the seat of your old Virginia Presidents, whom we all honor. And it would seem that he is only the forerunner of some great movement hitherward.

Lee.

As for me, I shall stay here on the sacred soil of my State, living and dying for it if need be. I wish not to be free of its domestic, social, and political chains, as you deem them.

Thomas.

Strong and beautiful are the ties of family, of community, of State—who can escape their subtle bonds? Yet a new test has arisen in the World's History, to be applied first here to us—a new

judgment-day is at hand, I would almost dare say that I hear its trump; we, even we two, are to be summoned before a new tribunal and tried by our attitude toward the Nation—not toward the State, the city, or our kindred, though these be dearest to us in our feelings. Can we rise to that?

Lee.

I cannot and will not.

Thomas.

Then, whatever be your personal character—and I know it to be tender-conscienced, of noble honor, and deeply religious—you will stand condemned as in the wrong before the High Court of the Ages, whose behest I have to obey.

Lee.

Here comes a messenger, I am summoned to go at once to Richmond.

Thomas.

And I shall return to the Capital.

Lee.

You see that I have laid aside my blue uniform, never to be resumed.

Thomas.

You may observe that I have come in a new suit whose color I shall never change.

Lee.

I repeat that I do not like slavery or secession.

Thomas.

I know it. Still I fear that you will soon be fighting for both. And just that is Virginia's tragedy and yours: smiting Union and Constitution in which you believe and defending with your blood slavery and secession in which you disbelieve. All History furnishes no more crushing Mill of the Gods. You are caught between the upper and nether jaws of Fate itself. I must flee the awful spectacle. Let me catch a breath of air under the high-pillared verandah of Arlington—yet it too seems fated.

Lee.

I must be off Southward by the coming train.

Thomas.

And I go in the other direction. Two Virginias I see in us, of equal honor, conscience, character, devotion to principle yet determined to let each other's blood. What is above this mortal strife, controlling it, directing it, to what end?

Lee.

I leave that wholly to Providence and do not ask Him any questions. I believe that He grows

impatient with too much interrogation. But before we part I shall tell you something else which will not out of my mind. Your decision will bring you your trouble. As a Virginian you cannot help being suspected by your superiors, even if you say nothing.

Thomas.

I know it well, and have already had the experience of such suspicion in high quarters. That is another reason why I would quit this locality and plunge into the West, where, however, I may not wholly escape. Yes, I too on my side shall have a strain of Virginia's tragedy in my own career. For her disloyalty—so I hold her act—will cast its shadow upon my loyalty, and make me suffer. But I shall remain faithful and defy envy and suspicion. My allegiance will be doubted when I have sacrificed everything for it; still I shall stay true, for loyalty is ever loyal, and cannot be made to turn its back on itself by ill treatment of friends, or by blandishments of foes. Union cannot drive me to disunion by any neglect it may visit upon me, and disunion cannot win me by any honor it may offer. I am a free man and propose to remain such, following inner conviction which is not to be swerved from the outside by personal favor or disfavor.

Lee.

I feel quite the same way, but on the other side.

Thomas.

Yes we stand on the two opposite shores of Virginia's chasm, which is also that of the present Union and its people.

Lee.

The bottom cannot be seen, but I must separate.

Thomas.

May you survive the conflict.

Lee.

May you survive the conflict. Farewell.

Thomas.

(Alone.) And so I pass from Arlington which in my vision changes to the seat of Fate itself. Behold these pleasant trees fluttering in the tender winds of spring, these flower-beds with many-colored laughter in the sunshine, this noble mansion with its front of joyous columns looking from the bluff across the river at the towering Capitol, and even at the White-House of the President! But look again! What an awful metamorphosis as Lee is passing out for Richmond! The fair Virginia landscape transmutes itself to horrible Golgotha, the place of dead men's skulls; even the

flowering earth spirts up to inflorescence blooming human blood. The soldier used to carnage, must needs sicken at the sight and turn away. What a relief to see yon Capitol still the same on its foundations firm! Yet it seems to me to nod and shake its head in warning to Arlington, and to Virginia, my own dear State. As I look around again, the horrible phantasm still pursues me—here the tragedy will enact itself.

I must quit this scene and pass to the river-valley of the Nation. Now I behold the White-House in the distance; a funeral pall floats over it, yet leaves it intact—what does this all portend? I know not, but my foreboding soul hints me that the Union itself is tragic on this side of the mountains, and bids me cross them to my higher destiny. But look at it again ere it passes out of view—beautiful but fated Arlington, like its owner, like Virginia! That rift is in me too, I feel it tearing my heart in spite of me! Here runs the Potomac, let me put its flow quickly between me and Arlington—and oh! Virginia. Brain- cleaving in this step of severance but I must take it! There, 'tis done, never to return to old Virginia, but perchance to new! Still oh my mother, this pain of separation from thee slays me—saves me!

Book Eighth.

The First Tragedy.

“The time is a volcano charged with chaos
And in its crater we are living now,
As we sit here in dark expectancy ;
I feel the primal molten elements
Of human passions long inherited
To be aglow and seething underneath
This house, this city, this whole land ;
And all the world turns to the pit infernal
Peopled with fiends, minded on deviltry,
Wearing the mask still of humanity.”

So spake Ward Lamon in an outburst fierce
Sprung of his office ; then he added this :

“The mischief swirls around our President,
And follows him wherever he may turn,
As centered in a hurricane of hell.
My duty is to trace dark passages
Of treason and of covered villany,
And nip them ere they ripen into blood.
Even to-day I ran upon a trail
Of plotted crime which seems to ramify
Northward as well as Southward, on sea and land,
Till I am lost in mazes of this task
And feel within my heart a brood demonic
Both gnawing me and clawing me at once
With teeth and talons of the Harpy worry.”

So Lamon, Marshal of the Capital,
Turned loose his harried soul to ease itself
In speech to Ellsworth, the young officer,
Friend known in Illinois, now the commander
Of Fire-Zouaves, a flaming regiment
Whose character was tokened by its name,
Which he had quickly disciplined for war,
And brought to the defense of Washington,
Full of the love of country in his heart,
Yet full of fate in his presentiment.
They both sat lone and darkling in a room
Where Lamon had his suite of offices,
Both weighted with the rash events transpiring
And to transpire in mighty sequence still,

Wrenching each soul from anchorage of hope.
Virginia has seceded, soon the second tier
Of Southern States will follow her example,
And the third tier, the border commonwealths,
Were swaying to and fro, uncertain where
To drop their future in the lowering storm.
The Nation's heart was palpitating loud
In beats of doubt to which each man responded,
And dreadlier those in authority
Which concentrated at the Capital.
Lamon well watched the secret vengeances
Of foes tense with the passions of the hour;
He marked in many too the quivering line
Of loyalty at sea, like a tossed ship
Still to be brought to port and firmly moored.
The Marshal's thought, tuned to the half-lit gloom
Which flung its mood upon the air they breathed
Relaxed to reminiscence with his friend
From a dread anxious day whose toil closed not:

“Our Lincoln is the center of the Nation,
Yea more, the center of the world just now
As this takes a new step in History
Which through its mortal instruments strides onward.

Most difficult position ever held
By the Great Man at turning point of ages
Is his, when God himself seems out of joint,

And all creation will undo itself
And strives to be again the uncreated,
As if the cosmos strove to chaos back.
Lincoln—will he rise equal to his task,
And stay the universal cataclysm ?
Mistakes in human course he has to make,
But just through them will he be fortified
To mount up to the new recovery ?
Limits he has—can he first see himself
Amiss, and then be quick to rectify
The lesser man to fresh transcendency ?
The self-corrective soul must be his own
Ere he be able to correct his time
Or bring it to correct itself like him.
In error's school, will he be aptest scholar ?
So I forecast, though tremblingly, the man.”

The Marshal wheeled about upon his chair
As giving a new turn to his reflections:
“That Proclamation still is ringing out
Upon the air the words of a new order
The militant trumpet of the rising Nation—
Has he the stuff to make the promise good ?
War will begin—a long and desperate—
Virginia gone ! How his task dizzies me !
More still to go ! The earth cracks underneath him !
Man seems dissolving in this dissolution !
And he to stop that elemental gulf

Whose yawn keeps deepening down to ancient night
And lets the demons out of Hell escape!"'

Then rising to his feet broke out his friend
Young Ellsworth, champion of forms blue-coated,
Touching instinctively his sword's bright hilt:

"My regiment shall be the first to cross
Yonder Potomac in steady line of march,
With serried ranks of gleaming bayonets
Fixed for the charge upon the enemy.
I at its head shall trample on the soil
Of the proud State which will be sovereign
And dare defiance to the Union.

My task allotted is just that, I know,
I must go first, though I be first to fall;
I shall myself haul down rebellion's flag,
Then wrap me in the wreath of Stars and Stripes
Though it be reddened in mine own heart's blood;
I care not, if I only may do that."

Lamon had hardly marked the resolution,
Touched with a bodeful gleam of coming hap
In the youth's words enforced by look and gesture,
When he again tapped what was inwards surging:
"What mighty shocks have we been passing
through!

The boom of Charleston's cannon made us quake
In every blood-drop; then the counter clap,

The Presidential call for soldiery,
Fell on our peace with a still mightier roar
Re-echoed from Virginia's ordinance
Which tore her from us with a shock like doom;
Our planet seems now rocking to and fro
In some vast cosmical convulsion
On which this little earth is tossing like a bubble.
No one can tell what comet next may strike us
Madly dashing from spaces infinite!"

The Marshal roused by his upheaving thoughts,
Still more by his own elemental speech
Reverberating thunderous on the air,
Sprang up and clutched with frantic grip,
As if he would arrest the age itself,
Haling it to prison for its turbulence.
Then he bethought himself of moderation,
And buttoned up his uniform to quiet,
Linking again his chain of memories:
"You recollect the day with clouds o'ercast
And lowering presentiments within us
Of what might him befall the journey hither,
When we with Lincoln started out of Springfield.
You stood beside me as he said farewell
Unto the citizens assembled there,
With overflow of melancholy words
In which there lurked a doubt of his return.
I noticed that you gave a bodeful twinge

Just at that point of his soul's dark foretoken
Which waked in you a thrilling sympathy,
As if the bolt smote you to hot response.”
The youth in softened mood gave slowly answer:
“I still must shiver in that memory
Which I bear with my sword from day to day,
Lurking beneath all this parade of war.
Let me confess, that was what brought me here,
To rid me of the presence of that hour
Which seems again approaching stealthily,
But with fate’s prophecy born into fact.
Tell me the story of your coming hither,
It brings relief to hear of you and Lincoln.”

The Marshal saw the shadow on the youth
Cast from his love of the good President,
Of whom he then began to anecdote:
“Some weeks before he was to quit his home
Lincoln had spoken to me, unwilling me,
About some office at the Capital,
In tones which weakened me of all resistance:
‘Lamon, it looks as if there is to be
A fight, and I shall have to take my part;
I need your personal help, such as you oft
Have shown, now more than ever in the past;
Start with me when I start, and you must stay
As long as I do in the Capital,
I shall provide you opportunity;

But you must bring me back, alive or dead,
Perchance the latter, for I have presages,
You know them well, of doomful violence.'

He quivered out his sympathetic tones
As if he voiced in pity his own destiny,
And sighed compassion with his warring self.

I swayed a moment in his fateful words
Surprised, but rallied soon to give excuse
Of other tasks begun or in the promise.

Says he: 'This is your most important turn,
The clock is ticking now your life's best chance,
You will become a cog of that huge wheel
Of History now starting to revolve
More rapidly than ever it has done
Before in all the whirl of Time's events.'

'Another person better for that place
May soon be found, or is already there,'

I said not relishing the sort of work.

'No Lamon, I cannot,' he answered me
In a persuasive tremble of the lip,

'Besides, I have not time to hunt him up,
Nor do I even know where I might look,
And the emergency now thrusts me on.

More than a dozen years you have been known
To me as friend, as partner in the law;
You have an inborn way of seeing down
Into the souls of men, of guilty men
Especially, and spying their designs

And their disguises multifarious.
My path on both sides with such characters
Is lined, their gauntlet I must run for life,
Yet scarce mistrust their evil purposes;
Suspicion I dislike as Hell itself.
That awful burden you can take from me,
For it sits easefully upon your back
As I have often noticed at the bar,
When we were dealing with the criminal.
Besides you are a Southerner by birth,
Aye, the Virginian needed, for you know
Your people well, especially the rogues,
If I may praise your talent to your face.'

I answered with mine own his gentle smile:
'That flattery will hardly spoil me, friend,
Or charm me to an office-seeker's lot.'

He drooped his eyes on me affectionate
With their sad pleading power, yet strong command,
Which bade persuasive like the word of conscience:

'Lamon, for me you show a deeper quality
Which reaches to the bottom of my nature,
And sets to flow the source of my existence
Afresh; you have a personal consecration
Which can commune with me at the origin,
And almost re-create me young again;
I need you as a soul to whom my soul
I can impart when it will not hold in

But strains to burst its bounds to death itself
And so be free of all its anguishes.
To you I may tell things not told by me
To anybody else—the secrets of my being,
Aye, those first nodes where I seem joined to God.
Many you know already but not all,
I deem I do not know them all myself;
New sources of myself and of the Self
Above me will be opened by my trials
Which you must share with me in sufferance,
Helping to make me over from the germ.
O friend, to you I can communicate myself,
I need you for my deepest transformation.
For I must grow, re-living great events
Within myself to win their deepest lore;
I must unfold in mine the time's own soul,
Mirror in me the spirit of the age
As it shifts through the shapes of fleet occurrences:
O help me daily reconstruct myself, loved Lamon.'

More in confession to himself he spoke,
I fancy, than to me, and yet he meant it;
I stood astonished at the confidence,
The crushing burden of his faith in me;
I drooped—he never told me that before
In all the years of our tried intimacy;
The task imposed seemed greater than my strength,
Yea, quite impossible, whereat I spoke:

‘Lincoln, of men you hold my heart’s own heart,
I fain would do for you what may be done,
E’en to the point which bade my sacrifice ;
But you have often breathed me your belief
In your allotted death by violence ;
You hold that Fate is ever hung above you
Ready to drop—how can I Fate forestall ?
Nor yours nor mine is to be circumvented.
Have you not told me of your moping wraith
Which haunted you at Springfield as you lay
Upon the lounge just after your election ?
Your double self reflected from a mirror,
Two counterparts, one dead and one alive,
Stood up before you there in imagery,
Facing each other till they swooned together
Into a nothingness at one lost breath.
You lay there thinking your Inaugural,
Dreaming its consequences to come on
Far-off in time perchance, but sure at last
Both to yourself as man and to the people,
Death to the one, salvation to the other.’ ’

Young Ellsworth gave a spring out of his seat
As smitten with some sudden sympathy,
And paced the room in silent agitation ;
Just one brief shudder whispered on his lips
In spite of his suppression of himself
Which capped his discipline of soldiership.

Lamon well marked the penetrating stroke
Which seemed to pierce some hidden depth of soul,
And start the throes to pulsing outwardly
Through all the close-knit frame of his brave friend,
Whom he addressed: “Colonel, why do you start
And shiver at our boding Lincoln’s ghosts
Which rise unbidden in our talk to-night?
They cannot be your own as well, I trow.”
Ellsworth re-took his seat and calmed himself,
Saying a smile-lit word to the narrator:
“Good story-teller of the spooks, go on;
I fain would hear the rest and all of it.”

Full of his theme and keyed to consonance
The Marshal struck the note where it had dropped:
“So I in my distress of doubtfulness
Recalled to Lincoln his own spectral drama;
Reflectively he bowed his head atilt
And turning to himself replied to me:
‘All that is true—I know that I am doomed
If I but go to Washington and dwell;
Still all the more mine is to go—I must—
If I do not—I speak my spirit’s call—
Then is this Nation judged to death, and I
Am damned the deeper, though at ease I live
Out Nature’s span disburdened of a task.
Not my small self, but the one Self of Selves
Lays that decree upon my shrinking will.

Lamon, my priestly friend, I whisper thee
My dread alternative of destiny,
One or the other of the twain, this Nation
Or I myself must take the assassin's blow;
Here I can choose, and now my choice is made,
Stretched up to the last notch of will—I go.'
Whereat his stalwart frame, oft laxly lolling,
Rose upward tense and straight with high resolve;
Before that godlike act of mortal duty,
I stood appalled and could not tongue a word."

Here Lamon stayed his speech's overflow,
While Ellsworth rose intensified like Lincoln,
And let a word leap from his toiling heart:
"That is the spirit's pattern I would choose,
And follow my exemplar's destiny,
E'en if I have to go before to death."

Both stood unworded in a mutual stare,
Until the Marshal mended where he left
Matters of import deepest still unsaid,
Threading again his broken narrative:
"Then Lincoln fell back to a moment's trance
Which gave relief from high-wrought stress of mind,
Whence poured a gentler spoken stream of words:
'And yet I have to look ahead with care
That the allotted stroke fall not my way
Out of its time, but be held back by foresight

Until the Nation may have shaken off
The doom impending now', said prescient Lincoln,
'And risen up in new-born unity,
Which starts its fresh career through centuries.
Then let me die when this cleft people lives
And integrates itself anew—but not before—
You query at the words: *But not before.*'
Lincoln a moment stopped at his own question,
Whose mark he must have seen writ on my face,
When he, affectioned more in tone, began:
'Lamon, protector, friend,' he spoke uprisen
And showering gleams of Heaven from his face,
'You have your proper work in the grand scheme,
I know that Fate is clutching at me hourly;
But you must be for me the buffer grim
Against her fiercely hot precipitancy
Until the minute ripens my last breath;
You cannot slay my doom, but you can stay it—
Prevent you cannot, but you may retard—
And Chance you can outfence by skill—not Fate—
Inevitable the deed, but not the hour,
Stave off you may the Now until the Then,
Guard me against the secret stabs of hate
Which threaten from the air on every side;
Your part, though hid, is great and necessary,
You are to bring about that I must last
Until the Union be no longer fated.
When it can live, then I shall cease to live,

Out goes my candle when the Sun has risen,
I say it, for I hear the trumpet call:
The moment I can take this Nation's doom
Upon myself, that moment is my last.'
So Lincoln gave me of his deepest Self
And I too heard my duty's thunder-tone
Of peremptory biddance to the task.
Somehow I seemed then to be fitted just
Into my niche of one vast dawning plan,
Not mine nor his alone, but the supernal;
We too must will what is beforehand willed,
Re-planning just the plan already planned,
And so we both can help our Providence.
As Man needs God for his completed Self
So God needs Man to get along as All."

Lamon here whirled in his revolving chair
And drew his plummet up from that deep well,
The well unbottomed of philosophy,
Then dropped it in the stream of history:
"Lincoln has oft foreboded me his death,
Reflecting on old tragic destinies;
He even read of Buddha in the East,
More knew he of the end of Socrates,
But most he ponders now the crucifixion
In which the dying deed was just redemption,
The individual's loss his victory,
The winning of his cause his tragedy,

The triumph of his life his farewell last.
My lot, I know, is but auxiliar,
I have to thwart the pressing destinies
By blows, or even by cajoleries
Until the circle of the hero's time
Be rounded to its node of last conjunction.
Ellsworth, here lies my fight against the foe,
Not like to yours in battle order ranged,
Where all the war is in the open waged.
Many a blow in secret have I parried
When ready to descend upon our ruler;
I watch the night-birds in their hidden haunts,
The faces writ with deadly messages
I have to read upon these surging streets,
And nip the murderer's deed ere it be done,
Forefend the dagger drawn from shedding blood.
But you, my friend, can smite the sunlit foe,
Though like Achilles, youthful, beautiful,
Heroic Greek of old before Troy's walls,
Your fate may line to early death and glorious."

The youth in uniform again sprang up
Unable to suppress monition from within,
And loosed his melancholy into words:
"That foe can strike me back—and woe—he will.
Lamon, your talk has tapped the fount far-down
Of my prophetic Self which hides its mood
Beneath my merry laugh exterior;

Know that to-morrow morn we cross in force
Yon river's bound and tread Virginia's soil;
When from the White-House I looked yesterday
I saw secession's flag flap in the distance,
Flaunting upon a house-top jeeringly,
As if to mock the Nation's Capital;
It must come down though mine own blood be pay.
You are aware I studied law with Lincoln,
Still not the jurist drew me to his presence
That I might daily gain his intercourse,
But his presaging vein of character
Was kindred to mine own though hid from view;
And somehow for his little boy, his Willie
I bloomed a love as for a God-born sprite
Who lived in bud the father's flower of genius.
Yet a profounder strain united me
With him in elemental depths of soul:
That was his sense of Fate beneath man's life,
Oft bursting to the surface in a word
Which bubbled up from his dark underworld
Then fleeted into silence of the light.
Such winging words of his I caught and treasured
Making them mine in fellowship of soul;
My military skill which he esteems
I hope to use in service of my country;
But the first goal of it I must confess:
I fain would follow him when he came hither,
In forecast of some common destiny,

Which I must live out for him in advance.
Lamon, I come my presage to unburden !
Over the White-House, over the Capitol,
Over the Nation what a pall is spread !
And over me too falls the gloaming sky !
The clock is striking and the hour is near
When I must head my marching regiment,
The actor be of mine own tragedy ;
I shall be first to fall at the first shot,
Start the procession long of sacrifices,
Of whom I sometimes dream I glimpse the last—
The last and greatest of that mortal list—
Hearken ! a rap ! who comes at this late hour !
I, soldier, shiver at the quick response.”

Lamon, half-startled, leaps up from his lull,
And with his hand on holstered pistol clapped
He passes jaw-set to unlatch the door
Expecting some detective’s fresh report
Of an assassin’s stealthy word or plot
'Gainst Lincoln, or the murderer himself
Might come to stab the Marshal in his den :
When lo ! in steps the President alone,
His tall gaunt shape ready to fall to pieces,
At every joint the bones seem loosening,
Pinched up his face and sunken, hollow-eyed,
Even his hat lies flattened into creases ;
Lamon addressed him with a heart’s reproof :

“Why do you, sir, expose your precious life
At this bloodthirsty hour without a guard,
Which I had sent, could I have dreamed this trip ?
The streets are thronged with secret foes of yours
Eager to knife you under covering night,
And you dare lay into their daggered fists
Just what they prowl for—opportunity.
How can I ward off even Accident
So fickle in its strokes, without your help—
Though I may have a spy at every corner,
And in each lair of brutal treachery,
To watch and hark, and to take hold if need be,
And have benetted with my unseen web
This entire city undergrown with treason :
In vain it is if you will bare your breast
In sheer defiance of the time and place
To the assassin wriggling in my toils.”

Lincoln appeared to drop down limb by limb
Into his seat as if his members lax
Would fall asunder from their central hold
So that his body looked a massed secession,
Ready to be dissolved his organism ;
Whereat he spoke in piteous pleading tones
For he had heard before the same reproof :
“My Lamon, it was rash, but had to be—
Hither I come, driven resistlessly
By my inexorable scourge of longing

Without delay to tell myself to you
As sharer of my spirit's inmost burden.
The double vision of my counterparts
Clearer and longer in their ghostly stay,
Again has been vouchsafed me from above—
For such I deem it now—their visit filled
The White-House fuller than before at Springfield
With their mute messages, yet more pronounced;
They talked in act and look—I understood—
I seemed the third communing with the twain—
My single self spoke with my double self
In apparition strange of what must be—
Two different selves of me I saw myself,
Till shrank from view those twinned appearances.
Then to my vacant reverie there slipped
Another spectral form, Virginia,
With many a wrathful threat of coming war
If I did not revoke my Proclamation;
I had to say to her my firm refusal,
When suddenly an ominous line was drawn
Blood-red between us, quite impassable
By either of us till a greater Presence
Filled all the room, whereat a vanishing plunge
She soared into the air about me misted,
And I was left alone to moon my gloom,
To wrangle with my whole demonic brood.
I had to speed to you, my soul's confessor
That I might ease me of my burdened world,

By intimate words of friendship's sympathy.
I cannot always jest away my cares;
Although at times I lighten clouds with humor,
I feel the rain-drops gathering for the fall,
Which sometimes whirls me to a hurricane.
To you alone I turn my secret world,
I live in that as well as in this here
Lit by our common human consciousness,
Which well cognizes lesser needs of mine,
Though all uncognizant of what I am."

Then Ellsworth slowly lifted up himself
To leave, unwillingly, that company;
For in their converse he could hear himself
Wording anew his own foreboding bent.
In Lincoln's office for awhile at Springfield
The law he read, but soon he gave it up,
Obeying inner military trend,
Forecasting, too, the tenor of the time;
He trained a model band of soldiery
And marched it to the center of the storm.
But a still deeper vein ran underneath,
Which Lincoln had observed as kin with his,
A hidden strand of Fate's presentiment.
So he besought his youthful soldier friend,
Who had stepped twice until he touched the door,
To drop into his emptied chair again,
With words which flashed a momentary smile:

“Obey command, I am your general now;
You are but colonel in your soldiership,
My name is writ by law Commander-in-chief;
Wait not to be cashiered for disobedience.”

More soberly the speaker added then:

“I know you have this self-same spooky world
In you, which I acknowledge also mine,
Though more unfolded 'tis in me, I deem,
By years and by my present task supernal,
Into a hierarchy's Presences,
Though of their order I have much to learn.”

Ellsworth once more sat in that trinal group
For he was tuned just to the coming strain:

When Lincoln started to renew confession:

“Two Cabinets I have for consultation,
An Upper and a Lower they are termed
In my thought's nomenclature of them both;
For my affairs political is one,
The Lower, made up of tried and famous men
Who do the business of the Government
Down to the atoms of its finitude—
Are active members of the organism
Of State with its nice means for ends complex
And multitudinous as corpuscles;
These ministers deliberate with me
On all details of practicality
Which vary with the ever-shifting tide

Of happenings that vesture naked Time.
But I well know there is another Power
Above me moving to its goal supreme;
For me this supra-mundane potency
Has its own members of its government,
Its ministers of last authority,
Who with their Spirit's Presidency bear
The over-rule of these United States,
And too of me, leading us onward all
To its own end which I must glimpse, though
faintly,
And tell unto the People in their speech
Which also is my homely dialect;
Thus I may bring them to participate
In the one foremost movement of the time,
Aye in the universal soul of History
Which also strives in them unwitting what.
Lamon, that is my Upper Cabinet
With which I oft commune in full-orbed vision,
We wordlessly imparting each to each,
By impress sent immediate of soul.
That Cabinet is not of my selection
But it appointed me for minister
Between the folk down here and it up there,
To realize its high decree in act,
And weave it in the sweep of man's whole move-
ment.
Such is my place supreme of mediation,

Between what rules above and works below;
I know that I must serve for the last instance,
Service is mine, though I be ruler too,
I must be servant to the Universe
If I approve me rightful President."

Lincoln had straightened his loose-hanging frame,
He tensed each nerve up to a ruling Will,
No longer sat he, but he rose and spoke:
"I am a member of that Super-State
Which disciplines the Nations of the earth;
Its minister I seek to train myself,
Vice-gerent of it I may be designed
In this new nexus of World's History:
Such now I hold to be my highest call.
Long since some fitful gleams of it would fleet
Down on my path, then darken suddenly,
So that I thought it but my fantasy,
I even laughed at it as superstition,
And never wooed it in my anecdotes,
And hardly mentioned it in public speech.
But since I entered the enclosed soul
Of which the White-House is the haunted shell,
That Upper Cabinet comes of itself
And sits with me alone, imparting first
The impress weird of its felt Presences,
Then making known its over-ruling Will
Which fuses into oneness with mine own

When I grow cognizant of it as truth,
To mediate it with my People's deed.
That Cabinet is too a composite
Of varying membership in grade of power;
How many they may be, I cannot say
As yet—later I hope to know them better—
Some fade away beyond their airy bounds
To vanishing shadows of the realm unseen,
While one, the high tribunal's judge supreme
Comes only as a Presence free of form
Descending on me, in me, and around me,
Yet bringing, when it bids, the last decision
Of all, and over all the Cabinet
Above, of which it is the President,
Aye, President of me the President,
And of my Lower Cabinet as well.
By its decrees alone I was braced up
To hazard that first Proclamation's call
Unto the folk to guard our heritage
Of instituted freedom handed down.
It fetched me Douglas on the moment's tick,
And also whispered me as it was vanishing:
‘The People will respond, be not afraid,
I shall be here myself with them—with you.’ ”

The two companions still were sitting there,
The Marshal and the Colonel as if dazed,
They felt themselves tongue-bound in trance to
thoughts

Beyond the farthest stretch of human speech ;
The world not to be cooped in mortal word
They glimpsed as true, indeed the only truth,
In ecstacy of mood unspeakable,
And heard the note of sphering harmonies,
Which echo in the soul from utmost spaces
When it is played on by the Universe.

Soon Lamon broke the silence getting weird,
With a quick-shouting line of vocables :
“What ! you and Douglas reconciled at last !
Antagonists in nature and in mind,
Twain in the very build of soul and body !
Your difference, I deemed, reached to the bottom !
Narrate to me that union of disunion,
It gleams a touch of forecast to my soul .”
Then Lincoln lifted up his downward brow,
Less sunken overhead in revery
Starting to tone more easefully his voice :
“Soon came a new appearance on the air,
In outline more distinct of shape before me,
And capable of breathing spirit-sounds
Which made me vibrant to them from the center,
Out of whose tones there flowed this new decree :
‘Call now your great opponent to the White-House,
The life-long rival of your triumph’s rise,
Be reconciled with him—lock hand and heart
In the great common cause which fronts you here ;

Far down you both have this one pulse-beat—
Union.'

But as I stood at balance in my doubts,
A third faint shadow fleeted with a voice:
'Be not the laggard—I shall bring him you,
See him now mount the steps—'tis he who knocks.'
I hasten to the door, and in walks Douglas
And bows salute with gracious heart-throbbed
words:

'Now we are one to make our country one.'
I handed him to read my call for troops,
'That is the note,' he cried, 'I shall enlist,
Let me now march and be your soldier prime;
Give me your orders Captain, you I serve.'
So he has gone to rouse our strong North-West,
The Union's child, to save its periled mother.
But as he stepped beyond the sill he said
With firm yet saddened look in sombre tones
Which welled out of his soul of deep misgiving:
'Lincoln, I know I shall be first to fall
Like him who first leaped on the shores of Troy;
That is the word of Fate I hear decreed for me!
So may I be, so pray I that I be
The firstling of my Nation's sacrifice.' ''

Mid the tense words in intertwining sounds
A distant drumbeat rolls along with dawn
Which starts to phosphoresce crepuscular,

When Ellsworth springs up to his feet at once
As if he must obey that muffled call,
And follow the faint signal of the light;
But as he quickly strode and touched the latch,
He let this outburst tell his stormful heart:
“My Lincoln, nay—that lot is mine—the call
I heard just now—did you not hear it too—
The overture of battle tuning up?
I shall be first to meet the doom of death
Preluding Fate for Douglas—and for you!
Yea, e’en for yours a forecast haunts me dizzy.”
But at that smiting voice oracular
Lincoln himself leaped up responsively:
“And I shall go the way along with you;
Lamon, farewell; doomed by ourselves we march.”

Too bodeful for salute they slid apart.
The twain sped talkless down the sombered street,
Each weighted with his own and the other’s gloom,
For both their bodes kept echoing through their
souls,

Until the White-House in Aurora’s smile
Glanced mid the leaves, when Ellsworth flashed a
word,

And pointed to a flag in the horizon gray:
“That token of the foe I shall pull down,
And then I shall return this way to you,
Again to-day you will behold me enter
Into the White-House. Fare you well, O friend.”

He harkened not unto the gurgling words
Which Lincoln throated sighful in response;
The Colonel sprang into the quickstep's gait
And reached the camp where lay his regiment;
He formed his men in order of the march
For crossing over to Virginia.

But Lincoln turned away with melting eyes
In fellow-feeling of sad premonition
Which stirred him for the youth and for himself
Since he too thrilled at touch of Destiny
That had foredrawn for him the lines of life.

But ere the eve shut off the sunshine's sway,
On this same day was brought young Ellsworth's
corpse
Stretched on a bier in his blue uniform,
The first to stain in blood secession's soil.
So he returned within one dial's circle
Tallying the Hours' swift race around the sky,
Into the White-House, as he had presaged,
From which he was borne out to dwell his tomb,
In military honor of the hero,
The protomartyr for his country's life,
Having as mourner chief the President,
Who mooded in himself the tragedy,
While all the folk felt Heaven's the dispensation.

When Lincoln came back to his mansion draped,
The monumental White-House, now a shrine
In which the order new of time is throned,
He sought his solitary self again
With which he would commune about this hap,
Whose sudden shock had overset his heart:
“I loved the youth, and had great hope for him,
When his career might flower out with years
And with the soldier’s opportunity.
A native genius for command of men
Through military discipline was his,
Greater than any I have seen as yet.
For me it was his high advantage too
That he had come the citizen in arms;
The civil power with us must stay supreme
Over the sword of war which it invokes,
Yet which begets an arbitrary rule
Wherein doth lurk a jeopardy for freedom.
My Ellsworth seemed uniting opposites,
Civilian and soldier, oft at odds,
Were twinned in him into one harmony.
And so he shone the model volunteer
For all the people willed to wage this war
In which we have to watch the musket too
Lest it may turn to bayonet the law—
Which is its record past in history.
A tumbling crowd of men he regimented,
And trained to ways of war in New York City,

So suddenly that still the act appears
To me as done by higher inspiration
Which sealed in him the gift of leadership;
And when I saw him head his soldiery
Which wheeled encompassing the Capitol
Then trod in chorus down the Avenue,
Until they came huzzaing to the White-House
With him as very soul of their huge body,
I said unto myself in admiration
Of that young Mars on horseback winging by:
‘There! he appears, my future general!’ ”

Here Lincoln raised his hand to point the man,
But dropped it slow with his sad muse:
“Alas! my hope of him is buried now,
And whom I love is smit again by fate
Just at the moment of fulfillment’s kiss;
So it has been and so it still must be
Until the cycle of my deeds runs full,
When my own lot of life shall come around,
And in my turn fetch me its mortal thrust.
Farewell, my Ellsworth, tied to me in soul,
And even membered with my family
For thy heart’s love to mine own child beloved:
But stop! shut off the dread presentiment!”

Book Ninth.

The Backwoods' Sage.

Lincoln.

Indeed! a new visitor from the West! On your card I read the name of Solomon Touchstone—it sounds familiar and yet I cannot quite place you.

Touchstone.

From Illinois, Montgomery County. I supported you in your last campaign in which you were elected President; also I cut grain for you in our locality when you ran for the Senate against Douglas. And so I have come to Washington just to note how you are getting on in this great crisis, and perhaps to ask a question or two. I am myself a live interrogation.

Lincoln.

Glad to see you. I like to receive visits from my old friends and to have them give some drops of public opinion from the distant parts of the country. I have already found that I cannot measure the whole people aright from this confined point of view though it be the Capital. But tell me, what do you particularly seek? Two places I have indeed, but three place-filers hustling—

Touchstone.

Enough! On that matter I shall set you at rest in one brief sentence: I wish no office, either for myself or for any relative or other person. I would be your officeless caller.

Lincoln.

What! not even a pen-knife to grind here! The first man I have met of that stripe from Illinois, or from the East or West; let me take you by the hand. The little cross-roads Post Office is piling upon me almost as much worry as the big war. But where have I seen you before, and heard that much-promising name, Solomon Touchstone? Ever since I glimpsed your profile, I have been delving for its pictured counterpart in my memory through many layers of years, and I cannot yet find the picture. Still I know it is there if I could only rub off time's dust somewhat.

Touchstone.

Let me help you a little. I was with you in the Legislature at Vandalia at the start of your career, and heard you make your first speech, in whose grandest flight on the Union out popped your girl sitting with you under the mulberry tree, at New Salem, I judge. Do you not recollect the applause? I sat just before you and shouted for the name.

Lincoln.

Yes, I vividly recall that scene with what went before and came after.

Touchstone.

You do not respond with your usual sunburst of smiles, but sadly, almost sighfully. Well, let me refresh you with another incident. Perhaps the reason why you do not identify me is because I have changed my head-gear; I then wore the backwoods' luxury of a coon-skin cap dangling with ring-tails, but now, in order to appear before the President of the United States, I have bought me at cost of some good dollars, the stiff conventional stove-pipe, which really disguises me. Then I have for the occasion laid aside my checkered cravatless shirt-collar and adjusted myself to the dignity of the White-House.

Lincoln.

Dignity! that never was my passion, you know. But the more welcome. I find a man now to keep me in tune with my own tailored appearance. I tell you, my friend, you and I look as if we had donned stolen suits; our clothes seem to have been made for somebody else.

Touchstone.

Yes, we both are rocking in the same ungainly boat on this sea of Atlantic fashion. But now for another little reminiscence: on our way to Vandalia we met at a chance farm-house, and both of us slept under the same coverlet as the people had only the one bed. In the night you gripped me so hard that I woke, when I heard you whisper a name in your dream with the deepest, tenderest gush of emotion of which the heart is capable. I was thrilled through and through with that tone, but in the morning I said nothing about the matter, as my soul was heavy with other outlooks. Already the great struggle which is now upon us was peeping above the horizon, and I was intent on it with no small anxiety. Do you remember my little dissertation upon Jefferson and his twofold political mentality, especially as regards the Union? He then rose up before me as the prototype of the whole country in its rifted halfness, half black half

white, half slave half free, half union half disunion, a condition which could not endure, as you afterward stated in your most memorable utterance, which I have read and pondered so much that it must be written through all the folds of my brain.

Lincoln.

That I have been led to recall often in my most recent experience; I have just been dealing with double Virginia now cleft to the bottom both within and without, in her thinking soul and in her landed body. Significant is it that her convention of unionists have torn up the Union.

Touchstone.

Well, let that pass. I have something else on my heart, whereof I would like to speak a word if you have time to listen.

Lincoln.

With pleasure. I am not only glad, but deem it very instructive and a part of my duty to talk with such persons as you, fresh from the people, and full of the beating of the popular heart. Especially do I wish to hear from my North-West, for I must keep in touch with it, though I be now at a distance from it and in quite another atmosphere. It sent me hither to administer the whole Nation,

yet as I believe, in subtle accord with its spirit. So you must bring some quaffs of milk from the old cow whose teats I used to suck directly, for my deed's innermost nourishment. Here I feel myself at times in danger of losing my hold on my original folk, that of the Union-begotten, free-born, hope-giving North-West—the Lord's new Land of Promise.

Touchstone.

Your words bring me to the chief object of my visit, and I shall speak it out at once. In your recent message to Congress on the Fourth of July, you affirm in your argument that the Union is older than any of the States, in fact created them as States; so in time, rank, and sovereignty it has the Primacy. Still you must be aware the representatives of the old colonial bodies politic met and formed the Union and formed the Constitution. That fact cannot be argued out of existence, as it seems to me.

Lincoln.

Well, what do you wish me to pump out of that view? You are big with some thought, let it be born.

Touchstone.

A distinction which is never to be forgotten, which is to become more and more significant with

the years, and, as I think, is to assert itself mightily in this approaching conflict of arms. There is the old set of States which formed this Union, Colonial, Europe-born, Atlantic, the old Thirteen, never to be increased in number, fixed in transmitted conventions, deeming themselves the fit rulers. Then there is the new set of States Union-born, river-tied, valley-joined, right aggressive, ever increasing in number, whereby our country is self-renewing and self-generating, and indeed self-regenerating. They belong chiefly to the one vast fresh-water valley which has oneness of territory through itself in its one great river. That difference is what must now be recognized—not for the purpose of separation but of the deeper unity which comes of the knowledge of differences.

Lincoln.

Aye, but I am President of the whole United States, of the East and West, even of the loyal and disloyal.

Touchstone.

True and rightly said, and I believe that too with all my heart. Still something must be added at present even to that. Of course we are familiar with the difference between Slave-State and Free-State—we are having trouble enough about it just now—but that difference existed before Union and

Constitution, and unfortunately for us was taken up into both, from which it is probably in the course of surgical elimination through this war. But you cannot stop simply with the preservation of the Union, it must be transformed.

Lincoln.

That may come in time. But at present we have our hands full of the act of simple self-preservation. When we get to shore, we may wash in fresh water our briny sea-stained garments. But what about that other difference in our land with which you began your lecture? It has evolved after and under the Union, has it not?

Touchstone.

Certainly. Let me remind you, Mr. President, you came from a Union-mothered State, and you showed it unconsciously when you argued in your Message and also in your Inaugural, that the Union gave birth to all the States, even to the old Thirteen. That is true of Illinois and the North-West, but not of Virginia and Massachusetts; the birth of your own State you clapped upon all the rest in a rather naive way, as it seems to me.

Lincoln.

Thank you for that compliment to my innocence, which is sometimes doubted in these days. So you do not agree with my argument?

Touchstone.

Not wholly, if you may permit me. You know that the American people, though not technical lawyers, are legal-minded, have to be so, if they shall vote understandingly to maintain their institutions. The humblest elector has to realize the Constitution and its history, and listen to its exposition from the stump. Every presidential election turns more or less profoundly upon some constitutional questions. Your political campaign—how well do I recollect my share in it!—hovered about the Dred Scott decision and the right interpretation of our organic law.

Lincoln.

Very good; my speeches to the people have had to be as legal as those addressed to judge and jury, even though I changed at times the law's stiff habiliments. Still, how about my argument upon which I set some importance?

Touchstone.

It is only half true of our whole polity; true of the America-born States, the well-called New States, now a decided majority of the family with young babes always plumping in; untrue of the Europe-born States, the old Thirteen, rounded-out, finished, no more possible to arrive. And

this difference of origin begets, yea necessitates a difference of character, whereof I deem you the most coercive instance—the unique personality begotten of America, not of Europe. I have been watching you unfold toward such a goal for some years—you can stand a little praise to counter-balance the blame you are getting.

Lincoln.

My friend, spare my burning cheeks, which your talk has set afire. Then you will puff up my vanity so that there will be no getting along with me.—But to the point: you hold, therefore, that the Union-mothered States have naturally a greater devotion to the mother, and will maintain their birthright with a mightier filial love, and with a deeper sense of filial duty.

Touchstone.

So I think, for their devotion to the Union is filial. And hence State pride is not so strong with us, since it was begotten in the old separate, jealous, mutually repellent colonies. It is neutralized in every community, since this is made up of individuals from various commonwealths. The great Western migration from the sea-bound States was really what unionized our souls as well as our territory. Still further, every large and small community built itself from within, through its own

members; it was not built by some individual founder, some minister as usually in New England, or by some English lord or gentleman, as often in the South. It was self-organized, through each individual; hence the power of initiative, so observable out there in our North-West. I tell you the distinctive American character arose with that great migration from the salt-water States to our fresh-water River Valley. And I dare prophesy that, in the course of the present war, this character of ours will reveal itself as distinctive by feats of arms.

Lincoln.

I suppose I am a sample of that lot—my grandfather, my father and myself all shared in different stages of that migration.

Touchstone.

Yes, you are the prime example. Then our life on the border, and our ceaseless struggle with the Red Man developed the same traits of personal independence and forthright initiative, with the power of self-organization. I remember you in the Black Hawk War. I belonged to a different regiment, but I saw you in command of your company repeatedly; much was then enacted in small which afterwards took place in large, indeed is taking place now tremendously magnified. I recollect the

talk and the turmoil about that fugitive slave-mother with her child who fled to your camp from Missouri; you never sent her back. What did you do with her? Report has it that you smuggled her out of camp in a Quaker's wagon. But the same has occurred hundreds of times since. Then I was not far off when a young Lieutenant named Jefferson Davis swore you into the service of the United States; the story was told that you brought your big bony fist down upon the table at the conclusion of the oath with such a thump, that the boards rattled apart, the ink was spilled, the darky ran out, and the Lieutenant sprang back startled, with his hand reaching for the hilt of his weapon.

Lincoln.

Many fables seem to be clustering about me, spinning fancy's cocoon from a wee maggot of fact; indeed I help a little in that line by a bit of fiction now and then. Quite as marvelous seems the incident that I first saw Robert Anderson in the Black Hawk War; he was the young Lieutenant who mustered me out, and now he is the Nation's first hero.

Touchstone.

Do you know that the people in Illinois have begun to spin a legend out of that fact ever since the bombardment of Fort Sumter but a few weeks

ago, in which Anderson took such an heroic part? I have heard only during the last few days that you then listened to a warm discussion between those two Southern Lieutenants, Davis and Anderson, out there on the border; their theme was the Union, at that time uppermost in all men's minds through the nullification of South Carolina—each of those two officers taking opposite sides, as they do now. In fact the debate proceeded to such a pitch that each threatened to open fire on the other at Charleston Harbor, if they should happen to be in command there of the two opening forces. A wonderful prophecy of what has actually come to pass! In many respects that Black Hawk War must have been a rich experience for you, a sort of preliminary training for your present work. In my own case I often seem to be going through the same encompassing world of events which I then went through. A much larger circle it is now—still I appear to be rounding it anew.

Lincoln.

I often now think of that war, embryonic truly for me, and full of forecast. I felt the germ of the present crisis throbbing then. The people had the same presage and threw it out into a fable. They must make a myth of what lurks deepest within them, though the act be unconscious.

Touchstone.

Yes, so the people are, and so too you are. What we have been speaking of strikes me as a pointed illustration. Though your argument that the Union first produced the States holds only of the West at present, a change will come which will make your words prophetic.

Lincoln.

I do not understand you—you are riddlesome as the ancient Oracles.

Touchstone.

The old Thirteen are to be re-born as New States. This war will put them all, Northern as well as Southern, Free-States as well as Slave-States, back into the womb of mother Union who will bear them afresh, so that all the States will be Union-mothered, old as well as new.

Lincoln.

In the name of Heaven who is to bring about that miraculous regeneration? Is not that a conception of your brain rather than of the mother? But who?

Touchstone.

You are the chosen man; you came from the right place, from the right people, from our free Union-born New World, whose character you are

to make universal before you finish, imparting it to all the rest of our country which has it not. So I forethink your chief fulfilment. Your recent message says as much, though in an uncertain way; when you declare that the Union is the begetter of the single States you speak not of what has been or yet is, but prophetically of what is to be. Really in that argument of yours you touched the dumb but fermenting aspiration of the folk-soul as yet unfulfilled, hardly yet expressed in its own right.

Lincoln.

Some such intimations I confess that I have foreboded at times. But a great evolution lies between now and such a fulfilment.

Touchstone.

Before this fiery smelting process of war is done, the whole Union, North and South, East and West, old and new, must be flung into the furnace and poured over. List! do you hear that far-off shout? I have been listening to it for days—it calls for the army's advance—

Lincoln.

But enough, good friend, of such bodeful vaticination at present. Still I am glad that you have brought me your message, which comes like a draught from the prairies of my own dear State.

Now I have to commune with the whole People, feel their willingness and unwillingness, move with them when they are ready, and to a certain extent educate them up to their enormous task. For they have to do the work; they must furnish the blood, the treasure, the votes, and the lives for the great sacrifice. And I, the unlearned Western pettifogger, as they call me here in the East, am to stand at the center of the Nation, am the very pivot of the World's History. And I have the temerity to believe in myself as capable of doing the job. There! I have caught the itch of praising myself from you.

Touchstone.

Excellent! I see that you understand yourself. But how unearthly it all seems! Little could I foresee that I would meet you here in the White-House, when I heard you dreaming in that farmer's cabin on the way to Vandalia. You show the ladder of ascent from humblest to highest possible for every American boy, yea, for all coming peoples. Hark! that shout again! now louder! The whole Nation seems to be marching! I wonder if I dream!

Lincoln.

Oh yes—I am reminded—I have a keen longing to know what name I lisped in my sleep, at your side, as you say, in that farm-house under a common coverlet.

Touchstone.

I remember it well, for not only the words but the very tones were imprinted on my heart's own throbs—Ann Rutledge.

Lincoln.

Dear friend—longer I cannot commune with you to-day. Hereafter I may see you again.

Touchstone.

To me also this is enough for once, though I hope it is not the last time. God speed you—farewell, my President.

Lincoln Alone.

“What a fierce whirl of stormy memories
Does that loved name call up within my brain
And dash me drifting on my inner Ocean!
Life’s deepest pleasure and its deepest pain
Leap forth to combat in those syllables
And make my helpless soul their battle-field.
The image of that vanished maid has come to talk
with me,
And in this White-House has its lodgment taken,
It would not stay behind in its old home,
Merely to haunt a solitary grave.
Already I have seen it several times
Or known its presence in my brooding hours,
With its all-loving look of holy grace
Which ever smiles on me humanity,
Coming to answer my unconscious prayer.

And yet I feel a twitch of blame within,
I hardly dare confess it to myself
Beknown, that I two loves of woman feel
In the same household, aye in the same heart;
One is a dweller of my Upper World,
And ranks there with the other Presences
Who have installed themselves without my hest,

And bring me intimations of far things,
As well as warnings of transcendent Will.
The other woman is my wedded wife
The maker of my home as it is here;
The mother of my children, and their care,
Companion of life's journey with me still,
Having her part in my official rank,
The lady of the Presidency's mansion.

But when I must commune with Love itself,
With universal Love in human semblance,
Whereof my heart doth often feel the need,
Until it breaks me down to overflow,
The vision of Ann Rutledge has the power
To dart into my mind ere I am ware
As if a living throb of my own soul,
With look allaying all my anguishes.
She comes and goes by no authority
Of mine, and oft when least expected;
Still sweetest welcome give I to her presence.
She brings to me a draught of primal Love
Which the Creator stirs for his creation,
The first affection of the All for all.
Amid this war's fell hate and battle's fury
I often feel the need of that creative Love,
Love of all love which made the universe,
That I be saved from mad destruction's fiend
Engendered by the strife of man with man.

Then o'er my longing flits that maiden form
And taps for me the heart of God Himself
When He has seemed cut off from me and mine
And makes it flow in fresh beatitude
Upon the desert of the time's hostilities.

And yet my wedded wife knows of that bond,
She heard of it by fame before our nuptials,
And asked me once about the tale she heard
And keeps it living by her jealousy—
She hears me speak the name within my dreams
Which bubble up the secrets of my underworld.
Awake I cannot always keep it down,
And stay it still in my unconscious sea—
Deepest experience of all my days.
When death transfigured in me my one love
From its eluded mortal counterpart,
And gave it back as an eternal Presence
Breathing the benediction from above
Which fills the character with charity—
I felt once more the worth of life on earth,
Now partnered with the purest self of love.

And yet that doubleness of soul I feel,
Two forms of womanhood dwell in my life—
A mortal one and an immortal too,
A lower world of love the dutiful,
With it an upper world of love ideal!

Two threads of man's existence at its best
Stay separate—and I must still endure
Till I outdo my fate on earth imposed.
Eternal has become the womanly
For me in a transcendent life of love,
To which I fly or else it comes to me
By some unbidden force which nature prompts.

Such is my lot, alas! my love of woman
The sacred substance of all human worth
Quintessence of man's own creative being,
It is in me divided as my primal curse
Like that which drove poor Adam from his Eden.
Still I must love, and suffering still dare
To love the twain who rend my heart atwain,
And make each throb of it a civil war
Which turns me to a picture of Disunion
Whose seat is love itself within itself,
The fount of the Creator's universe.”

Thus Lincoln told upon himself again
What he would keep most hidden from himself,
The ever-bleeding secret of his heart,
Though it would bubble up betimes to light;
The backwoods statesman mid his flinty thought
Had mingled tender old remembrances
Which smote in Lincoln his first blow of Fate
Again, which he again must overmaster:

For hark! from the outside repeated shouts
Come rolling over him in revery,
And sternly wake him up to what is here,
The duty of the moment staring him.
“Forward to Richmond” is the omened cry
Which falls upon his shuddering ears untuned
From the whole North unthoughted of the stake,
And bids him start the march and bide the test.

Book Tenth.

The Fatal Line.

“Forward to Richmond! on to their Capital!
And light our camp-fires by the river James!”
So sang the quick-stepped regiments in line,
And cheering trod the streets of Washington,
Then crossed Potomac’s petty growl of wavelets
Wrying its front at what it could not help;
Along Virginia’s fields and streams they tramped,
Printing upon her lofty-featured face
The People’s mark of heavy soldier-shoes;
From all the North too rose the shout “Advance!”
The thousand-throated Press re-voiced the yell
From every little coign within the land,
And from the cities on the seaboard strown.
Loudest and farthest-reaching was the cry

Editor Greeley shouted to the People
With many a streak of finding many faults,
Wherein he crowned himself the champion.
Of Lincoln he had never seen the worth,
From an old rivalry in leadership;
He rather thought himself the greater man,
Likewise he deemed he had within himself
The better stuff for making Presidents.

But still the soldiery kept marching on
With steady tread and war-whoop thunderous,
Column on column, dressed in lines of blue
Vying with Heaven's dome, until they reached
The battle's roar at Bull Run's rivulet,
Which drew the fighting line between the foes,
Upon the wrinkled face of old Virginia.
All day Report which from the front sped winged,
Had messaged friendly words to Washington;
When suddenly came shivering on the air
A shriek importunate and charged with dread:
“Back to the city! save the Capital
From the victorious foe now in pursuit!
Safeguard the President before too late!”

So rolled the quaking rumors from the front
Increasing ever in reverberation
Until the rounded welkin seemed to yield
Its heights to mighty hurly-burly

Uprising from the clash of earth below.
The city, still expectant of good news
Which had unbroken streamed for many hours,
Felt the quick shock as if the coming age
Reversed the wheel of great occurrences
Suddenly in the flow of History.

Soon roll in sight the waves of fugitives
Over the river, surging through the streets—
Affrighted human masses rushing onward,
Who never turn their heads around to see
If anybody may be in pursuit,
But quake the more because of their own noise,
And run the swifter from their very running.
Behold the Congressmen in flight pell-mell
Who rode out for a happy holiday
To see the play of easy victory !
How they now lash their horses through the press
Of sweltering bluecoats, who are often gunless,
Aye hatless too, so great is now their hurry.
No rest of mind is possible to-day
Till they have quit Virginia's blistering soil
On which they trod so boldly yesterday
Thinking to end the war in one short fight
And so fulfil prophetic Seward's oracle.
The flood gates of the skies flew open too,
And poured an elemental deluge down
To help float faster still the roaring mass

Unto the roiled Potomac's bridge of sighs
Which eased the terror of the fugitives.
The blue-coats soaked flow down the Avenue,
Hungry, foot-weary of their rapid race,
Scourged by a power to them invisible,
Yet all the more it wrought their fantasy.
Soft-eyed they gaze unwitting of their prayer
Up to the Nation's domed Capitol
As to their overarching Providence,
While still the moody rain upon their cheeks
From frowning skies would drizzle sullenly.
The dauntless host, starting in boastful glee
To sweep across Virginia's guarded hedge
Onward to Richmond, now the Capital
Of all secession and her own as well,
Is writhing in one mighty terror's clutch
Which wrenches everywhere all Washington,
Leaderless, almost weaponless with fear.

What is the sign? A hand, not of the foe
So much as of the Power over all,
Hath seemed to interfere with grip divine.
The soldiers marched up to a certain mark
And toed it firmly for a while in fight,
Then felt the shock, the sudden shuddering shock
Which set the army's bravest heart a-tremble,
Not from without so much as from within,
As if a God had smit them for the act

Which had in it the curse of some transgression.
And so their flight seems from their very selves,
Away from their own deed along Bull Run.
Wagons and ambulances full of wounded,
Caisson and cannon horsed in furious speed,
The soldiers wedged together at the bridge,
Officers trying to order the disorder,
And make the ruin silent and respectable—
Such was the time's return to primal chaos.
Steeds took the panic, snorting with a plunge,
Even the herd of cattle felt the whiff of fate
And gave a horned dash, heads down, tails up,
Which made some soldiers run a little faster,
But madded more the Pandemonium.
The darky driver whipped his team of mules,
With eyes bulged out and curly poll unhattled
Until his wagon plunged down in the river,
To his crazed shout: “The spooks are after us,”
Voicing that world's phantasmagoria,
Painting on his black face demonic terror.

The President slept not a wink that night,
But read the thickly wafted messages;
New sorrow plowed across his furrowed face,
As the disaster grew in magnitude
His sunken eyes drooped deeper in their sockets.
Sage Seward, who had learned to know him best,
And how to tap the spring of his hid thought,

Making it flow for his relief within,
And get it in the deluge of affliction.
Came to the White-House soon to give support
Their tongues spake little to the air,
Their souls communed the better in the silence,
As they went wandering down the billowy street
To see the surge of fleeing soldiery.
They heard the imprecation of the crowd,
And saw the faces haggard of despair
With cry repeated hundredfold: “We’re whipped,
And Hell is after us—just at our heels.”
Each struggled to push further on and on
As if he strove to get outside himself
With all his might, and could not do it still.

They also marked some features gleamed with joy,
Whose owners were those whispering citizens
Who stood at corners shoaled in twos or threes,
Expecting next their own victorious friends
To stake a camp on Presidential grounds;
And even neutral faces hitherto
Would teter toward the other side in smiles.
At last the two soul-worn pedestrians
Sat down to rest upon a bench alone;
The President then bowed his head and spoke:
“Seward, I have been trying all these steps
To delve out what the secret bearing is
Of this defeat and the calamities

Which like the Furies seem to fang us still,
Whatever may be our attempt of war.
Young Ellsworth's pall has spread itself on me
While our reverses thicken as the clouds:
Is the Almighty, then, against our cause?
Or is our ill a discipline divine
Unto some higher end we know not of?
If so, what is that end to which we're scourged
By the remorseless Powers over us
Until we do the deed as yet undone?
And I am whelmed to ask this question of myself:
What is, then, evil, and who uses it
To force compliance mortal to his Will?"
Then likewise Seward spoke his pensive mood
Though to another key he tuned his word:
"My prophesying I shall quit to-day,
And play no longer the time's oracle,
Almighty's voice I cannot counterfeit.
Three months I said at first the war would last
And deemed I had the high decree forestalled,
The hour is up and war has just begun;
The robe prophetic here I shall lay off."
Whereat unconsciously he tugged his lappet.

But Lincoln was too rapt to think a smile,
And lapsed again into his troubled vein:
"What is the bent of these events I probe,
And who directs them by a providence,

Teasing us with appearances at first
Of victory, to make the blow more heavy.
Manassas sent an early note of triumph
Then trumped the scornful counterblast of flight,
As if our arms were but a mockery;
Is the great Ruler some grim humorist
Who spins the universe in irony,
To watch our woe's grimaces on his stage
For his high self's amusement cosmical?"

But Seward is not mooded to such strain,
He turns gloomed Lincoln's look to contrast new:
"See him! here comes a soldier with a laugh
As if he were enjoying just himself
In viewing desolation's comedy,
The only placid face that we have met:
Alone unscourged by demons seems his gait,
But dodges merrily the fiendish flight;
Fain would I find his secret for us both:
'Tell me, my man, whence come you and what
news?'"

The bluecoat leaned against a post in peace,
And marked his words with great deliberation:
"I feel not here at home because I have
The one sole pair of legs that will not run;
The reason for it I may here confess:
My luck was to be nipped a prisoner
Soon in the fight by a gray-suited squad;

This done, the rebel lines before me there
Fled in a panic from the little stream
They call Bull Run, and headed swift for Rich-
mond,
The Capital of their Confederacy,
And never thought of taking me along.
Left to myself, I struck the other way:
I simply waded through some shallow water
To reach our men, when I beheld them too
Racing with all their strength from that same
stream
And headed swifter still for Washington,
The Capital of our good Nation still,
And brave, or to become brave yet, I hope.
I stood sole master of the battle-field,
And held the line from which each side had run,
A while the arbiter of North and South,
A little God I feigned me of World's History,
Until I caught a commissary's donkey,
And rode from thence in peaceful contemplation,
Of the mad wreck of war strewn everywhere,
The broken vehicles upset and ditched,
Crackers and bacon scattered on the road,
The musket bayoneting gentle earth,
And the cocked pistol muzzled in the mud,
With the unownered sword of officer.
So I kept straddled till I met the guards
Who needed beasts and then I gave them mine.

I have just crossed the bridge flooded above
More than below, to take my promenade,
To see if I can see what is to be,
Perchance to meet the Lord who can command
Again this chaos fresh: ‘Let there be light;’
Perchance to run across our President
That he might flash this scene with gleams of humor,
Or cap it for me with a pointed story.”

Lincoln rose stirred and straightened at the speech
Of that blue-capped buffoon, so sage yet clownish,
Who then once more let out himself in mirth:
“I split myself teeheeing on the way
To think how both sides like two silly pups
On coming face to face with swaggering tails,
Dropped them affrighted at each other’s bark,
And yelping ran contrariwise to kennel.
And so that little puddle of a brook
Appeared possessed of some weird water-sprite
With charms to shoo each army off in terror.”
Away the soldier strode still with a laugh
At what he deemed the merry comedy
Enacted by the whole United States
Just for himself as sole spectator there.

Lincoln, although he smiled a frank good-bye,
Had keenly felt the deeper tragic thrust
Shown in the folly of that narrative;

He rose up from his seat and walked in thought.
Addressing thus his minister beside him,
Yet talking also to himself within :
“The best report of all, most luminous
It shines its meaning on my soul.
Methinks I spy it now in bloody fact—
That line, that fatal line, whose fiery circle
Spectral Virginia saw enring herself,
Lit by a mighty Presence from above,
When she appeared once yonder in the White-
House,
And bade defiance, not to me alone,
But to the Power swaying both of us.
That phantom line now flames a wall of fire,
It seems to me to blaze the boundary
Between the two embattled ranks of war
That front it, bristling guns on either part:
Which side can cross it, break it down perchance?
This first fire-test, this battle of Bull Run
Proclaims to all the Nation, *neither side*:
It is the line between the North and South,
Between the Capitals, our own and Richmond,
Between the Rivers, James and the Potomac,
Between the going old and coming new,
The line between this Union and its death,
The Fatal Line of bloody separation
Which now impassable doth seem decreed;
But it I have to pass compelling Fate

Which strikes me back red-handed in revenge
When I dare reach the consummated goal;
That crimson line forewrites my tragedy.”

He clapped his hands before his anguished look,
When Seward spake him kindly sympathy:
“My friend, be brave, surrender not yourself
To that grim fiend who lurks upon your path,
Coiled up and quick to spring, snake Melancholy,
Encircling in black folds your boding heart—
Anticipation is the tempter sly,
The devil lurking in your Paradise.”

Then Lincoln spoke his word more placidly,
And tuned his featured face to his reflection:
“The Nation’s task it is, and mine therewith;
I see it well, and thus present it to me:
Can that dead-line, now drawn to sight, be crossed,
Or turned by some flank movement yet unseen
To save this Union from its mortal rent?
The rebels have repulsed our first offensive,
Thrown back we are upon our self-defence,
Deeper than ever yawns the rifted States
Which drooping lie around in dissolution.
A greater effort than before is now required
To save from ruin’s breach our Fathers’ work.
Next I must hearken what the people say,
For they are now aware of this disaster

Whose news has sped already through the land,
And echoes back from the remotest bounds
Unto its heart which is this Capital,
Where my set ear must catch the Folk-soul's
throbs."

Here parted the two friends, each went his way,
The President sprang up his mansion's steps,
And hastened to his office anxiously,
That he might hear the answer to defeat
Which swelled up from each Northern village
And rolled in volume vast to Washington,
Enkindled with a resolution new
To keep the Nation's first integrity,
And offering their strength and wealth and blood.

But still there rose some fresh discordances,
Old party lines began to gape again
Under new leaders—Douglas being gone;
But Lincoln held to his great policy
Which would unite his side, divide the other
And thus maintain the Union first of all.
But opposition rose in his own party
Just from this policy of wise forebearance,
Since some rash spirits sought to batter down
Slavery as foremost cause of present evils,
Right at the start regardless of the Union.
To such the President set forth in print

A document of reasons for his course
Which too the People read and gave assent—
Aye, but they gave more than mere assent,
They gave themselves in deeds of consecration.

But well he saw in his foreseeing soul
The fruited time was ripening speedily,
When he would have to grip the monster black
Of servitude, whose life lay in that rift
Between the States, and sword it mortally
With one huge thrust of Presidential might—
The modern Theseus in his act supreme
Slaying the labyrinthine Minotaur
And setting free the victims of its curse.

Lincoln had flung himself upon his couch,
That teeming couch of his foreshadowed life,
From which he gazed up at and read his stars,
When he fell into musing on his mood:
“Why is this trial sent upon me here?
The plan divine I grope for in my lot,
And glimpse it mazy with cross purposes,
With thwarted hope I live and love undone.
Yet plainer than before I see my goal,
But not the where or how or when to be,
Still less the why it is thus as it is:

Which counsel stays untold me in God's bosom.
And yet one oracle I can make out
Borne on the spirit-wings of this event:
That Fatal Line so dreadfully inscribed
I must break through to reach my destiny,
Or sweep around it somehow on the flank
Getting behind it by a long detour
Which may take years—alas! I have to bleed
Responsive to ensanguined fantasy.
Thou, Bull Run, though a petty stagnant pool,
Thou hast me limned my labor's boundary
As thy sad waters blaze up suddenly,
And show to me a wall of living fire
Through which I have to pass ere I may rest,
Be it the peace of life, or yet of death.”

So Lincoln brooded on that blood-lit line
Which wound before him in sad imagery
Through meadows of Manassas and its stream,
Significant of what was yet to be,
In prophecy of battles still unfought;
The bound it lay impressed upon his Fate
Which he has to surmount to save his world,
And then himself to find what lies beyond.

While thus he reveried in halved hope
Of what was to become of him and his,
Another portent sinister arose

And filled his field of vision more and more
With its new problem of an inner breach
Which menaced his own side of soldiery,
So deeply had the rifted time been graved
Upon the souls of those defending Union.

Book Eleventh.

Lincoln's Double Dragon-Fight.

Sadly had come the sere autumnal months
Of the year eighteen-hundred-sixty-one;
Gloomy they overhung the hapless Nation,
And yet the time kept thickening gloomier
Despite attempts to lift the dreadful pall,
And exorcise that spell of haps infernal.
The effort to erase the Fatal Line
Which rent the Union into warring halves
Seemed but to make it deeper all its length,
As if they could be welded nevermore,
And overmake the land into one Nation.

But now another rift seems opening
Within that side which sought to close the breach;

Secession creeps out of its Southern haunts,
Trailing across its public boundary
Slyly into the Northern armament,
Which had in might uprisen to put it down,
And starts dividing also it in twain.
Those who support the Union and its cause
Threat new disunion of their side,
Though it as yet be but a secret thought
Of the two leaders highest in command,
Perchance unconscious to themselves, yet real—
For each keeps subtle grasping more and more
Of power personal unto himself and his,
Defiant of the center of authority.

Lincoln beheld and watched the first small creak
Which had kept widening out into a chasm
In spite of all his kindly remedies;
His two chief Generals have now become
A puzzle to him in their purposes.
Alone he lay upon his couch in thought
And questioned what might be the hidden plan
Fermenting in their latest words and deeds,
Which had been streaming to him manifold
Through private channels and the public talk.
He knew the military character,
Which even in the humblest captaincy
Trains subtly to an autocratic sway,
And molds the mind by what it has to do.

From thence he was well ware a trouble fresh
Would rise, and with it also duty new
To save free civil government of laws,
And keep his own the place supreme of rule.
From both headquarters whispers often buzzed
Of a dictatorship by soldiery,
To take the place of legal Presidency—
From the near East and from the far-out West,
From Washington and from St. Louis schemed—
To wrest by might the scepter of supremacy.

Lincoln was nodding from his waking world
Into a slumberous doze of hazy horrors
Which flew like wraiths along a borderland
Of skiey cloud-wracks fleeting nebulous,
Until they hardened to one furious shape
Which grew to be a dragon of two heads,
One short, one very long in its outreach;
With both of them he had to wage a fight;
One after the other, thrust on thrust
They darted at him, for it fortuned so
Both did not strike together in their blows
As in a joint conspiracy for power,
But separately each would grasp it all;
Nor would they share the prey between themselves.
Each dragon clawed at him with taloned paw,
Or with its fanged jaw sought to snap hold
Of just his single head and hurl him down

And then to slip into his vacant seat;
But he with wit alert would dodge their blows
From both directions, so he kept his place.

Each of those shapes drew after it a tail
Of many followers like to itself,
Which made great uproar with their bellowing
To fright into their ranks the anxious People.
Loudly pretended both to fight the rebels
While they rebellion nursed within their hearts,
Shunning the open foes in war embattled
For spinning plots against authority.
And yet that dragon had a function true
For which its mighty talons had been given:
To cleave the foe and not the magistrate.
Out of its belly spat up fire and smoke
With detonation of artillery,
While flashes of a thousand gleaming swords
Tongued everywhere around it menacing,
And myriads of muskets marched in sheen
To sound of drum and fife or martial brass,
Then countermarched in glittering parade
Up hill and down, across then back again,
Returning to the spot from which they started,
With outlay vast of semblance military
Making a large round zero of themselves:
So passed the precious days without result,
Although revolt stood daring them to fight.

Lincoln himself had called from out the deep
That monster for a work of magnitude
Which somehow it could not be brought to do,
But rather turned its secret war on him
Seeking to overtop his leadership.

The President then dreamed himself to be
A soldier holding in his hand a sword
Unscabbarded and ready for a clash;
He thought to cut off both these heads at once
With that keen weapon of his might supreme,
Testing the edge of justice on the beast.

But as he raised his arm on high to smite
Those hissing dragon heads upreared aloft,
He felt a hand of aught invisible,
A grip full tense which held him from his blow,
And heard thus in monition's gentle tone:
“Hold Lincoln! that is not the better way;
Cut them not off in wrath, though much incensed
Thou be, and justly too, for their ill deeds.
Beware lest thou undo that dragon's strength
Which is to meet and slay rebellion armed,
When thou hast found a higher generalship.
Wait, and thine eyes will spy a wondrous act—
A stranger transformation of the beast
Than ever has been fabled in old lore,
How Cadmus slew his dragon, then sowed its teeth,
Which sprang up armed men with mutual slaughter,

Letting each other's blood in civil strife.
Spare them and hand them over to themselves
Each will bite off its head without thy sword
If thou wilt give it but the time to act—
Let it unshape itself which it has shaped.”

Then Lincoln looked up toward the startling sound,
Still half adream among his waking thoughts,
And voiced himself to the Invisible:
“They hold me weak, those dragon Generals,
And think to grasp and wield my easy power,
Which they deem drooping piecemeal from my
hands,
Weening they need but stoop and pick it up.
How separation runs adrift to-day
Upon the much perturbed stream of Time!
The inbreathed air contains it everywhere
As the soul's ozone born of our great storm,
With lightnings flashed around a continent.
Time bids that I defy its subtle craft,
And smite it with my Presidential mace,
When I can reach it still among mine own.
So now methinks I shall snip off at once
Those soldier caps tipped on two dragon heads,
Which yawn secession's chasm within my ranks.”

Whereat the speaker caught the sibilants
Of whispered words out of the weird unseen:

“I voice once more thy upper guardianship:
Let those twin grisly shapes born of the hour
Undo themselves of their own nullity,
Then cast each out in turn a self-slain corpse,
Though living still as individual.
Besides, thou art to be exemplar new
Which shines forth universal charity,
Yet with the wisdom of all policy;
So stay the penalty, though due it be
Aye more, think not revenge against the foes
Embattled yonder on the other side.
Thus is the Nation’s whole restored in thee
The first of all, the savior President,
From whom the healing balm drops to the future.”

The voice died outwards but re-echoed still
The waves compassionate on Lincoln’s heart.
Whose was that word unsensed except of soul,
Yea quite unsyllabled of human speech?
So he kept looking at himself and quizzed
The rapt communion with what is above,
When of a sudden he bethought himself:
“That dragon of the West comes challenging
My exercise of last authority,
Dares me to give the blow decapitating,
For it will play the martyr to the cause
Flowering from emancipation’s bud.”

While still he lay aswoon upon his couch
Quite in the middle of his fighting dream,
The messenger slipped in to wake him up:
“A lady from St. Louis has arrived”
Said he, and shook the dozer to a stare;
“She has to see you right away, she says.”
Lincoln arose and rubbed his eyes while mumbling:
“Another dose of that Missouri mess;
Its factious spirit causes me more trouble
Than all the other States if put together.
Her card—how reads it?—Jessie Benton Fremont;
I have already heard of her as General
Over her husband, Major-General Fremont,
Whose proclamation I have just revoked
Emancipating slaves within his district;
Well I must see what sort of scene she makes,
Some training I have had to stead me now.”

As Lincoln came into her presence scornful
She rose and spoke in haughty dignity:
“From the commander of the Western army
Now overruled in his great deed of freedom
I bring an answer running in this wise:
He will not even modify a tittle
To suit your purposes political
That noble edict of emancipation
Which stirs such loud response in loyal hearts;
Revoke it if you will, but he shall not.”

Then Lincoln after musing calmly stated:
“As friend I would advise him otherwise.”
The woman’s hearty wrath broke out thereat:
“Friend! let the word not pass your lips to me!
You are no friend of Fremont, well I know it—
You never have been, always you have sought
His ruin, as a man too great for you,
Listening only to his enemies;
And now you send a foe to spy him out,
A bitter foe from your own cabinet,
One of that hostile family of Blairs
Who wish to rule St. Louis and its State,
Yea seek to make their favorite son, Frank Blair,
The President of the North-West entire
Re-moulded to a new Confederacy,
From which he will ascend to take your place.”

The words burst forth in deepest passion’s lurch,
Which Lincoln answered with a soothing smile:
“Tell me about that—all that you may know;
In such a work I take an interest.”
The wrathful woman still kept up her strain:
“He is the most ambitious man I know,
The lust to rule is his though ruin fall,
His henchmen everywhere insinuate
Their hateful speech against our policies,
And you give ear to all their calumnies.
But hear from me the truth at least for once:

The General took charge of vast confusion,
He had to make an army out of nothing,
Suppress corruption's reek at every nook
And root up treason in its hidden haunts.
By fiat he is bringing out of chaos
A world of order new to be the Union;
Huge is the task but we shall do it yet,
If only meddling hands will keep aloof
From here—this central point of interference.
I come to insist that Fremont be allowed
To use authority in his own way,
To make selection of his officers,
Decreeing what he deems for public safety
Without officious check from central power,
That he may execute his grand designs.”

Blandly the President to her replied:
“Authority already he has used,
And followed his own will in what he did,
As if he were the monarch absolute.”
How the high lady bristled in response!
“And he was right in that—Fremont was right!
But now I come again to the main point:
His final message I have brought to you:
That proclamation of enfranchisement
He will not mutilate; if you dare do it
The consequences be upon your head.”
“What are those consequences which you hint?”

Asked Lincoln rising from the easy loll
Upon his seat, with facial muscles tenser:
But Jessie Benton never yet had quailed
Before the shape of man, nor did she now,
With her forefinger pointing admonition:
“If he so wishes, for himself alone
He can set up another government;
The people are now with him in this blow
He strikes at slavery, source of all our trouble.
The North will flock to him and give him power,
Besides, he has a band of followers
Devoted to his fortunes personal,
Who would not fail to aid him at the test.”

Then Lincoln steadied his fixed eyes on hers:
“So you have come to threaten me unless—”
“I am the daughter of the mighty Benton,
Illustrious Senator for thirty years,
Orator, writer, great in word and deed,
Who never blanched before a living foe;
Old Tom would dare—would fight a duel too,
And so would I—his blood seethes in my veins—
I claim to be a daughter worthy of him,
As steel strikes sparks from steel—such is my answer.”

So spake the dareful woman to the ruler
Who deemed he had found out enough, and said:

“Well, leave me his reply which you have brought
And it shall be considered at its time.”

Such deference did only rouse her more,
She thought she spied a weak-willed President,
And so she gathered wrath for last attack:
“I shall not be put off with such disdain,
Say to me now what you intend to do,
I shall not go away with empty words,
Insulted for my absent husband here
By you, the President—give me your answer.”

Then Lincoln straightened up his lopping look,
And over-towered with his presence lofty,
Speaking the word of highest majesty:
“Madam, the State can never let itself
Be threatened by its own subordinate,
Least by a soldier insubordinate.

I shall myself revoke that proclamation
And issue it, if need be, through myself,
Who am the Nation’s hand to do such act.”

“The People’s execration light upon you!”

Hissed there a Fury at him who replied:
“I am the People’s voice, aye too their will.”

He turned around and picked a letter up:
“I had expected Fremont to refuse
My mild request, so I wrote out an order—
Here, this it is—present it to your husband.
My messenger has rapped and I must see
New visitors—fair journey to your home.”

The angry woman soon had whisked herself
Out at the door, when Marshal Lamon was an-
nounced

Bringing another note from mad Missouri—
A Westerner wild-eyed but sleek for once
To meet in Eastern form the President.

The nodded salutation being over,
Lamon began to address his care-faced friend
In lowered tones of a secretive voice,
Quite natural to that subtle officer
Who had to explore the underworld of crime,
Especially to worm through in the dark
All the laid labyrinths of tortuous treason;
He whispered first of what he had just seen:
“Madam Fremont I noticed passing out,
In an excited flurry dashed she by,
I deem you had a red-hot interview,
She muttered as she whirled her skirts in wrath
‘Incompetency in the highest places!
What lack of recognition for best worth!
I give this drifting Union up for lost,
The only man to save it is now thrown!’
So flew she out not saying a word more;
I know her—I have corresponded with her
Upon affairs affecting her department,
For it is hers as to the inner power,
While he, the husband may monopolize

The outer show and splendor of his place
Which she allows him in a fair division.”

Soon Lincoln’s face relaxed from austere lines
As he commented on what he had heard:
“Yes Jessie came and truly gave me Jessie,
So that I cannot wholly blame her husband.
She issued to me here a stern command
What I should do on pain of her displeasure;
Her words, her manner, and her fists implied
That her Fremont, if minded so, could seize
The strong North-West out of my feeble grasp;
Yea the whole country was as good as his,
He needed but reach out his mighty hand
To pluck the fruit and take it for himself.
I let her run ahead in angry mood,
As she told much that I would gladly know;
Yea I provoked her to keep up her ire
Giving a little spur if she might lag,
For in her wrathful talk she let me see
Her husband’s secret spirit of ambition,
With all the ruling thoughts at his headquarters.
For hours she kept on tap her hidden heart,
And poured me out its treasures at first hand;
The half I never had before suspected,
The best detective on herself she came:
Lamon, in your own line she has excelled you,
Better than spies is her own espionage.”

So sped the President's free narrative
Until he turned about to look and darted
An eye-shot at the strange Missourian,
Who caught some whispered ravels of the talk;
Him graciously the Marshal then presented,
And started for the door in worded haste:
"I must be gone—later I shall return—
I still have one wee word to tell my heart
To the chief magistrate—but now I leave you."

Lincoln surveyed the man before him tensely,
And marked the pointed flash and quick which
leaped
And pricked out of the casement of his eyes;
The huge nose overhung was notable,
And played responsive to the part within;
His skin was browned somewhat to coppery,
For he had lived much in the open air,
Chasing the deer of the Missouri woods,
And dwelt a cabined hermit by himself,
Shunning the highways of the Time's mad rush,
Disdainful of the man who civilized.
And so he came to grow an Indian's look
Companionship alone wild Nature's soul,
In deep communion with her lurking world.
The President had scanned his jutting features
And jotted him as an original,
Autodidact, perchance autochthonous,

Man primitive emerged from Western wilds:
In gentle tones of homely courtesy
Lincoln could not forbear a bantering twitch:
“What news from your part of the land, my friend?
And still let me foresay you are yourself
To me already a prime piece of news;
Now I would hear you voice your personage.”

The stranger tokening the friendly word,
Shot full his eye-beams from his luminaries,
Lipping his fluid accent strangely mixed
Between a backwoods English and Low-German,
Yet veined with gold of flashing fantasy:
“From out my holy log-house hermitage
Nestled amid the ancient trees and hills
I come lured by the call importunate
Which shrieked my country’s prayer for Heaven’s
help

To me within my humble hut remote
Where I was wooing days of solitude,
Communing with the Self omnipotent
Which is at once the All and I myself.”

Lincoln felt foundered at the mystic speech,
The more because it grazed his deepest life,
The underworld unplummeted by sense.
The great uncouth, however, did not pause
At such a daring plunge of human mind
Down to the bottom of the Universe,

While on his burning cheeks the sparkles snapped
And tipped his nose with gleams of irony.
The reason of his errand he bespoke:
“Well do I know my strangeness in this world!
I read such printed lines upon your face,
That they retort to me your most hid soul,
And speak your smile which you forbear to show.
But I shall break at once into my task:
I bring some letters from my friend, Frank Blair,
Who is the Genius local of our cause
In the great fluvial city of our West,
And taps the secrets of the plotting heart
Which meditates far down the public dole
Perchance itself not ware of what it is.
His message is in brief: Trust not Fremont.
I heard that same suspicion’s whisper here
Between you and the Marshal ere he went.
And it has slyly crept through all the land,
Troubling the many patriotic minds who brood
The outcome of imperious soldiership
Which has been conjured up to slay the fiend
Rebellion, which now flaps its vampyre wings
And sucks the blood of all our youth most choice
Who have responded to their country’s hope.
And yet behold the repercussion strange:
Secession glances back into our ranks
The very blow outthrust to smite it down,
We catch the plague which we would medicine.”

The man made pause to give a look at Lincoln
That he might read the feature-writ response;
When the quick President snapped up the word:
“I see that you have ideas of your own to tell,
Gossamered subtly in the nets fine-spun
Which catch philosophy the exquisite:
Interpret this Fremont, his character,
Philosophize me what he is—his soul.”

The stranger’s face pulled on its wisdom’s mask,
To speak with gravity the saws of sage:
“Just what I came so far to tell, you ask.
First in his columned traits I would set down:
He is by genius the adventurer
Who loves to make a dash to the unknown,
And tamper with the unexpected turn,
Gambling his stake away for novelties.
He fits much better into nature’s wilds,
Than into settled order of the law.
As he surprised Sierran solitudes,
So would he now bedaze the peopled State
And charm it with emprises venturesome,
As if he were the first and only one,
Absolved from all authority above.
Romancer is he in his farthest soul,
And well he knows how to romance himself,
Encircling round his head the aureole
Of the romantic hero of the West

To brain-crack smit by glamour of his spell.
And yet his magic shuns the feats of arms,
Undeeding him to flights of fantasy ;
A hero unheroic he in war
A conqueror without a victory.
I have to think, in his exploits and speech,
Of my old friend, of Latin origin—
As is Fremont—Don Quixote de la Mancha.”

Lincoln looked trickling out his teehee tender,
Meeding the Spanish knight of writ’s renown,
Then plumped his mite into the narrative :
“ Ay yes ! I see the Teuton in you still,
With his old grudge ’gainst Rome’s great centuries,
Although imported over cleansing seas ;
And in your accent I can hear his echo.
But never mind—more speedy be our sail—
Though still one poignant fact I must declare :
I voted for Fremont not five years since
To be the President of these United States,
Now to such port I have arrived myself.”

The answer waited not another tick
But struck the chime upon the tonguey bell :
“ Next let me pop outright the pregnant word :
Fremont is sure he ought to have your place,
The Presidency, so think his followers.
To be more loyal to himself he trains them

Than to the Union, which they care not for,
And which indeed they do not understand,
As they are foreigners of Europe's birth
And character and speech, or mostly so ;
Soldiers of fortune ready for the boldest stroke,
Many are outlawed from their homes abroad,
Adventurers from California's early days
Whom Fremont knew when he was in that State,
Living and loving a life of violence ;
He acts as if he were the monarch sole
Already in his castle fortified,
Which is surrounded by his sentinels
Watching at every corridor's approach ;
I sometimes saunter round his marbled mansion,
In which his quarters rise palatial ;
I feel me in a royal atmosphere,
In presence of some old-world satrapy,
While every tongue drops broken accents strange,
Till I run off from discords of my ear.”

Here stopped the speaker's voice as if he heard
In his own tones the brogue reproving brogue,
And Lincoln listened to it smilingly
To hear the battle of the broken words,
Which jolted through the native idiom ;
Whereat he threw a sentence in the gap :
“I like your accent, though it be not ours,
Upholding what is ours against itself.

Now tell me more of your philosophy
Which spins the fine Fremont in his cocoon.”
The man picked up the thought and thus went on:
“No, not a citizen can ever reach him
To gaze the presence of his majesty,
So thickly layered round about him there
Are placed his guardsmen to enclose his person
From vulgar spial and speech, as in the Orient
Where is the sway of despot absolute.
When he goes forth a numerous body-guard
With gorgeous trappings circles him in state;
He now distributes to his favorites
The offices, and farms commissions out
For friends, and contracts marts for followers,
Makes even generals by his own fiat.
He plays already the grand autocrat,
Having his court and royal flatterers;
He tolerates no hero but himself—
Lyon he let be sacrificed unhelped
Whose lofty deeds he nagged at enviously,
Who famous stood, he deemed, blocking his way.”

Then Lincoln interjected a quick word:
“I question that view of the case in hand,
It were short-sighted beyond reason.
But tell me, have you no report from Blair
Who ought to know best his own city’s need?
I would be glad to hear what he intends;

Of all Fremont's opponents he is center,
Between them has arisen frenzied strife,
For each is not without a love of power,
And each would rule the other, but cannot,
Whereat they fly apart in desperate encounter,
Whose fury hunts me here in Washington.”

The man then rose as tall as Lincoln's stature,
Made a grimace enforced by gesture quaint,
And in a dialect of fiery fragments
With elemental lightning from his eyes
Which lit Titanic brimstone for a moment,
He hurled his sentences of broken English
Until he calmed down to his fluent vein:
“I am the friend of Blair and know the man,
He has a gift which fathoms deepest plans
Instinctively when hostile to the State.
A genius goes with him political
Which whispers to him hidden strategems,
The possibilities of treasonous deeds
Ere they be done outright or even thought of.
I tremble at him when I list him probe
The plots which lurk within a character,
And hark him prophesy what is to be.
All this is merely to foresay to you,
That Blair suspects Fremont's fidelity,
Believes him prone to seize the civil power
If opportunity hit time aright.

Has he not tried to pluck what is not his,
As fruitage of his military title?
More perilous will grow this hid revolt
Than the wide-open one, if not soon nipped;
'Tis time to smite with power ultimate
The monster of two heads reared East and West,
Which threat division of our own one side
Whose unity is the sole hope of Union;
O President, decapitate the dragon."

The stranger shot out of his eye constringed
A lightning like the frantic basilisk
As if he would himself the horror pierce
Somewhere above him darkly hovering;
So for one glance he demonized his face,
Which then calmed back into its first serene.
But Lincoln felt a shiver chill him furrowing
Along his stature from the toe to crown,
And bristle up the roots of his stiff hair,
When he had heard this strangest of all strangers
Thus reproduce the monster of his dream,
The very ghost of his imagination,
Which he had weened the fiction of his soul.

Meanwhile the wordful man again had tapped
The philosophic fountain of his brain
Which shot up speeches darkly metaphored:

“Methinks the Universe will now divide
Cleaving itself in fresh creative act,
As once it rose new Cosmos out of Chaos.
The time is strange, Secession rides the air,
Like the world-slashing Norn of fabled fate,
Not only in the South, but in our North
Which shows a bent to split up into sections.
The entire country is centrifugal
In this wild whirl of mighty revolution.
Fremont has felt the time and seeks to be
Its pivot-turning representative.
But you, O President, have double duty,
To put down both these sorts of separation:
That is to be your place in history,
With whose supernal Presence now you dwell.
And since I have been here in Washington
I find this seed of Northern separation,
With the attempt to wrest the civil power,
On the Potomac as on the Mississippi,
Out of your hands, if you will not hit home.
How many times I caught that whispered word
Dictatorship, while strolling on the streets,
Lolling at the hotels, in the saloons,
Mid mingled groups of busied citizens,
Or as I strayed through camps of soldiery?
Look! both these gullets gaping for your head
Right here and yonder too you must encounter!
Now split the double throat of that damned dragon.”

Lincoln stood startled at the stinging words
Which tallied ghastly with the picture of his dream ;
He wondered at the man whose waking soul
Had streamed into one secret channel with his own ;
But he recovered from his lorn surprise
And spoke a placid word unto the man :
“Let me then fortify you with a thought,
Ere you return to tell your stewardship.
I have revoked to-day the proclamation ;
With this keen pen I stabbed the ravening gorge.”

The stranger loosed the features of his face
As if in great relief from inner strain ;
He took his hat and started for the door,
Saying, “I must be off this very tick
Of time’s huge horologue now tolling troubles,
Which hence will echo madly through the land ;
I must be where I can some help extend
And try to barrier out the rising flood.”
Whereat the man pressed on his shapeless felt
Over his long barbaric wires of hair
Which danced in tangled twirls down to his shoul-
der,
As he but gave a solitary nod
Turned more within than outward to the light.
He sprang across the sill upon the world,
Yet from his haste he shot back one more oracle :
“The outfought fight is here not to be won.”

Thus sped the stranger to the darkened future
Behind whose curtain seemed to syllable
Those final words of his while vanishing
Into the distant void of silent space.
Lincoln stood balancing their double sense
When he lapsed to his couch of reverie
And duly tapped a fresh soliloquy :
“I ween to glimpse my seer’s prophetic sight,
Preluding in myself what he predicts.
Fremont I know has voiced the magic word
Which sends its cry to Heaven—emancipation,
And thrills the folk responsive East and West,
Though many lag along the Southern border.
That word is mighty too within myself
And makes me throb to love of liberty,
Which is man’s heart-beat for his Paradise
Though never lost yet ever to be won.
I well can see the hour runs hitherward
When I shall have to seal from highest place
As the whole Nation’s act, this very edict.
But now I dare not step so far ahead,
To challenge all the future in a minute,
It would still further disunite our people,
We cannot cross the flood ere it be reached.
I have to wait till time builds up our faith
Which now is daily marching to its goal
That only the free Union can be saved,
Made worthy of the bloody sacrifice.

So I reject this act, not ripened yet
With the full season of the folk's conviction,
Though it has taught me lore which I shall treasure,
And made me hear awakened echoes far
Which time the tread of measures coming on
And tune the overture of History.
E'en if I quench in clouds this little comet
Which is a gleam out of a distant world,
But rays its only sheen from borrowed light,
The Nation's full-orbed Sun emancipated
I shall install forever bright on high
Rounding its course obedient to law,
When I first glimpse its morn crepuscular
Flashing the day ahead up the horizon.
Fremont, for this I shall thee not depose,
Despite thy wrong against the Nation's headship,
I leave thee still intact of rightful power,
Enough to make or yet unmake thyself.
But mark! I cannot help removing thee
When thou hast by thine act removed thyself;
I have to re-enact thy fatal self
And stamp thereby my seal upon thy freedom,
If thou in doing still art self-undone."

There Lincoln ceased in some unspoken thought
Which writ relief across his furrowed front,
But only for a moment, when he clouded
To a fresh-featured scowl at aught he saw

And broke once more to solitary talk:
“I do forget—wandering in my West
And playing with the future in my dreams
I lapse from what most presses me just here
Where still the other dragon-head uprears
And menaces a longer, harder fight.
But the two monsters—so I comfort me—
Cannot co-operate to the same end,
E'en if they coalesce in common hate
Of me as of their rightful overlord.
Fremont outruns old Time in a wild race
To pluck the apples of Hesperides,
Ere they have ripened into golden fruit,
Romancing all the future to himself,
As hero hoar of deeds adventuresome,
Outfabling feats of antique Hercules
Who slew the snake in guard of Paradise.
But ah! M’Clellan looks the other way,
He faces backward for his ideal world,
And clings to the traditioned elder past,
Which he will re-instate though it be dust,
And keep the Nation slaved to its own chains
When they have rusted off quite of themselves.
I cannot make him quick-step with the Now,
He quails in horror from the Present’s face
As if it were a Gorgon in its glance
Which turns him into stone stock-still at once,
And makes him shrink back from the Fatal Line

As it might be his own, his very self,
So that he cannot move a step's advance
When it but dawns within his vision's soul.
And still he dragon-like snaps back at me,
And will engorge all in his soldier's power,
Dreaming the word forbid—dictatorship.
Yet I shall utilize him in his worth—
What is that noise—a rap at this late hour?
It strikes dark emphasis upon my thought!"

Book Twelfth.

The Fightless Dictator.

Soldier.

Is that the White-House stretched out yonder
beneath the fitful half-moon's clouded face?

Watchman.

It is, my patriotic friend, for such I may salute
you by your uniform. Night's noon has struck,
but you can note that the President is still at work
by the small stream of light pouring hitherward
out of his chamber window.

Soldier.

Would he were not so busy with our army at the
front, paralyzed by too much interference from
Washington! Then what delay in sending us more
men and better equipment! Our needs are sadly
neglected.

Watchman.

Yes, that is M'Clellan's ever-growing shout, *more soldiers, more materials!* Why does he not do something with what he has? Parade and parade, day in day out, capped with the building of more forts for defence! Always getting ready, but never getting there!

Soldier.

We all love M'Clellan, love him more than we do Lincoln. He ought to be yonder at the other end of this little streak of light, and then there would be a sunburst. Perhaps he will reach there some of these days.

Watchman.

Pass on, do not loiter here, go to your quarters. You are not wanted on this beat.

Soldier.

A word more, and that word is still M'Clellan.

Watchman.

Enough of your idle camp-gossip; besides, I have something which weighs down my heart, and which I must look after at once. Move on!

Soldier.

(Going.) Glad to get out of this hole. Tomorrow I shall see dear Little Mac again, as he dashes by with his glittering staff before his sold-

iery's eyes at the grand review. The greatest man of the time, the rest seem pygmies beside him.

Watchman.

(Alone.) Happy riddance, for my soul sinks with a heavier mill-stone than even M'Clellan's inertia. A new attempt to murder the President, whom I love! This air is full of daggers of assassination, the blades at times gleam to me in the lamplight, then they scabbard themselves in the dark. Or is it my fancy! Two nights ago I heard a couple of suspicious fellows hatching a plot; when they saw me come out of cover, they ran and escaped in the shadow of the bushes. I would give my life for Lincoln; I represent the People too, their love for their President. But I am afraid the murderer will reach him yet, he is so careless of his own protection. I must walk into the White-House here and unburden my heart. This is the spot where he knows my rap.

Lincoln.

(Enters.) Welcome, my faithful guardian. I judge by your close-drawn anxious face, that you come bringing me a new detective story. I enjoy such even if I have to be the hero of the plot. I acknowledge there is enough reality in it to make it exciting. Still I cannot see what anybody can gain by killing me. Why, the rebels seem to re-

gard me even as an advantage to their cause. But speak it out—what have you uncovered now?

Watchman.

You know I have volunteered this work without your asking, and at first without your knowing. I come again to warn you to take better care of yourself. There is a plot to assassinate you some evening while you ride out alone, as your habit is when you go to the Soldier's Home. Have you seen no sign of it?

Lincoln.

I confess I saw a flash and heard the crack of a gun, but the bullet whizzed by harmless, and old Sorrel leaped for life. So I escaped, as has happened before, doubtless. I tell you my fixed impression: my death is not for me now, in the middle of ill-fortune; when my luck turns, then you can look out more sharply; I am proof against Fate, till the victory—and that is not in sight just as present.

But here comes the Marshal who has charge of rascaldom, and with him I must confer. Good-by, my devoted protector, your affection touches me, yea heals me, and you must come again, and show it for my need. I repeat it, you have done me a service in coming to me and showing me this kindness.

The Marshal.

Strange fellow that! a detective on his own account, out of pure love for you which indeed we all feel. But I must now tell you frankly that you are to have a guard of cavalry to accompany you, when you take a jaunt out along lonely roads—we have had warning enough recently. You have refused such escort hitherto, but to do without it in the future is fatuous. I shall not try to protect you longer in this way of neglect—I shall rather throw up my office, for I can do no good and shall get only blame. If you keep courting Fate, she will some day accept your invitation, however much I may try to keep you apart.

Lincoln.

My dear friend, not so hot; you can have your way. You are commander-in-chief over me and I shall obey. Send your squad this evening; I grant I have had some convincing experience recently. I may shun a few flying fragments of Accident, though I cannot evitate the inevitable. You may bulwark me somewhat against the Devil, but not against the Lord. Send on your little buffer; it will do some good, as it will comfort you.

The Marshal.

Very well so far; but I come to-day for an additional purpose. We need not go to the West in

order to find germinating the idea of dictatorship, of which you heard not long since. We have right here in Washington that same perverted notion in a military chieftain. It is a sprout which grows out of the time. This vast array of soldiery seems to waken everywhere the feeling of arbitrary power in the highest officers, that is, the military officers, which however we must keep nourishing and even augmenting. Strange is the spell; the Titan we have called up to lay revolt, takes a strain of revolt. And I am getting to think that some of our civil functionaries may not be exempt.

Lincoln.

I know well what you are mything; I have heard much of that fabled monster, and I have felt him more.

The Marshal.

Let me then speak straight out: our General has opened two kinds of head-quarters, one over yonder in the army, and one here in the city, the political.

Lincoln.

You signify M'Clellan, the new Grand Sachem of many feathers; I too have been watching him, often going to his house here and to his quarters in the field. We have also summoned him to the

White-House; I have been inclined to give him what he wanted, to the extent of my ability. He has asked for men, munitions, all the means of war, and they have been furnished, though he keeps on demanding more. Unsatisfiable he diverts hither not only the Eastern troops but many Western; he somehow has got to thinking that the whole war centers here, centers in himself. And he has always sought for more authority, more power—but he does not do anything with it when he gets it, except to make the bigger parade. Still I must believe that Mac has his unique merit which is needful for the country.

The Marshal.

Well, I come to talk to you about him. I have been taking notes on him! and have resolved to tell my results so far. He took a house here in the city, that gave me my chance. I observed who came and went; I watched the crowd which surged to worship the rising star. Of a sudden he saw himself the center of a select society composed of silent men and of talking women; and it is not friendly to you, to your family, to the Union. I noted at once the insidious influence; the whole blast of Washington's rebellious atmosphere he breathed, so did his household and those close to him. In less than one month he began to cool to-

ward you and become less hearty, more fault-finding; he was not the M'Clellan of West Virginia, active, sympathetic with the work, but a paralysis had set in. That political house of his in a fashionable quarter, was his bane—the first start downward, I feel. Already I say he is not the same man who won the Rich Mountain campaign. He seems in the process of developing on a new line.

Lincoln.

Yes, but this is a much greater job, and we must give him credit for what he has done. That little tack-hammer of West Virginia he wielded fully; but can he whirl this ponderous sledge of the Potomac Army? He organizes it well, drills it industriously, but always he will add to its size, till he seems getting unable to lift the mighty implement he has constructed. But I must let him try, yea drive him to try, if I can.

The Marshal.

He is laborious—a scholar and a writer of books—full of drill and closet strategy. He was an engineer in the army service. I have noticed that branch; its work is to defend, and its votaries take character from their profession. M'Clellan expects attack, seems unwilling to make attack, his soul is on the defensive. But we in this war must

take the offensive; unless we are ready to separate forever, we have to assault secession in its lair. The South claims the defensive and has the right to it. So in M'Clellan's very self I see the Union divided, simply defending itself—that is his vocation, yea is his character—hence his conduct. Then I cannot help thinking that the political germ is already laid in his brain and must sprout.

Lincoln.

What you say I have observed, but I still hope to spur him forward. I grant he lacks initiative. But then see what affection he inspires! How the soldiers love him, believe in him! That is a trait most necessary in an army—affection for their leader, a personal devotion which impels them to any sacrifice. I am fond of Little Mac myself, though he has shown his disregard for me, has even snubbed me. I may have felt indignant, but I must suppress all my feelings of affront in view of the great end; I shall hold the bridle to his horse, if he will mount and ride to victory. A man who can inspire such love in man as he does, has some good in him; at least I shall not yet quit hope. I confess I have that ideal myself; as my eternal gift of fame I would inspire love in the hearts of the people. Therein he and I have a common goal; but he wins, I doubt if I do.

The Marshal.

Let me say, my friend, that is your power over me and over many, and in time perchance over all men when this war's hate has passed into the calm of History. But I shall have to tell you plainly: you have not stirred love in M'Clellan's breast; there, for some reason, you have failed. I know that he deems you his secret foe, and thinks that you are trying to ruin him. Strange hallucination! But I have tested it on all sides and know it to be true. He has said it—I could, if need be, cite the witness—but I shall not.

Lincoln.

In that you touch the most sensitive spot. I cannot win the heart of M'Clellan, though I have tried in every way. He refuses his confidence, suspects me, yea shows a sort of jealousy, as I construe the fact. But it is my sorest disappointment that the man's affection which I need most is refused me; it makes my breast ache with a pang of unrequited love. Still I must keep my affection for M'Clellan, I shall not let him estrange me.

The Marshal.

Excuse me if I pained you, but I feel that my duty is to communicate what I know. I have traced the origin of this attitude of M'Clellan. The first days he did not show it, but it budded

when malcontents began to whisper in his ear political ambition, that he was the greatest man in the nation, that he was to save it, but in another way from the present one. Well, he is capable of vanity—what right soldier is not? Such a play upon his self-conceit never took place before. He came to dislike the President as limiting him, he conceived he ought to be in your place; that title of yours, Commander-in-chief, has become his nightmare. So arose that jealousy you speak of. He dreams already of being your successor, for the partisans opposed to you now are oft seen at his house, and even with him in the field. I have the record of what some of them have written to him.

Lincoln.

I do not worry over that, as the election is some three years hence. But it sets my eyes to scalding to see old General Scott so harassed by this young officer, that he has resigned. Still I shall appoint M'Clellan the General of all the armies which he wants. No other man appears, and I shall try to win him still, and even humor him. And yet I often pray for the coming Captain—when will he drop down upon us? I know not where to look.

The Marshal.

So Mac is now our generalissimo; more success to him and to us. One other matter I must im-

part, after having told of his political headquarters. At his military headquarters runs a somewhat different word: dictatorship. The soldier's training waits not for the legal process of government, but he acts by sudden fiat out of himself; that is the spirit—command—obey. Now at M'Clellan's headquarters—that word is often spoken by his military entourage; he himself has said it—he has even written it. I may yet be able to get the very copy. At any rate for months that ominous word is given breath among the officers, *dictatorship*. He has gone so far as to say aloud: “I would take the dictatorship.”

Lincoln.

That talk is idle, though mischievous. Only the successful general can be dictator; I have pondered much the fact. But I am unable to push M'Clellan into fight; when he comes back a conqueror, I shall settle with him then about usurpation. I would like to drive him to a chance of being dictator by victory. But, my Lamon, that is the danger of all war, that militarism mid free institutions.

The Marshal.

I am aware that you keep your eye on that possibility in such a time as this, in which the Nation has become one vast camp of soldiery. The instrument evoked to put down rebellion is next in peril

to the rebellion itself. The means may overweight the end, unless guarded against by supreme circumspection. Therein I feel that you, the President, are again the pilot to our safety; there will be no military dictator in this war despite the menacing sign in the East and the West.

Lincoln.

My mind never strays far from this sleep-robbing theme. But my chief stress now is to find a General who will do the grand deed of arms; just at present I would rather nurse him to power than curb him. I need not tie success till it is caught. I told you of the two-headed dragon; that worries me less now, though not out of sight by any means.

The Marshal.

What is your darling anxiety at this moment? Possibly I may be able to give it a stab and let its life.

Lincoln.

No, you cannot, it lies not in your field of warfare, I wish it did. But so much I must declare to you as friend: it is the Fatal Line I saw drawn and confirmed by the Upper Power at Manassas between the North and South, and separating the Union—I visioned it a deep and bloody chasm which neither side could pass. Yet I have to pass

it—and that is my fate. Upbear me in my trial,
O Heaven! I cannot face the ensanguined sight!

The Marshal.

Terrible presentiment! Its shock rives you!

Lincoln.

I am better now for having told you, my friend, doctor, aye my confessor. I have spent my deadly mood upon you—now is the time for you to go. I soon shall be myself again. God save you for me and for the country.

Book Thirteenth.

The Fatal Line Broken.

Lincoln alone.

That is the contradiction of my task !
The lawyer I must yield the law to force !
And nurse the soldier in his violence,
Train him to strike regardless of the law
So that the law may live to be supreme ;
Since in it too is drawn that Fatal Line
Brought to this country with our ancestors,
Fixed in the Constitution's fettered forms,
For generations grown into our thought,
Worded by daily speech and intercourse ;
In me it is, I know, and in the people,
And yet it only can be now cast out
By exercise of military might,
Which I must raise and foster, and then use,

Daring the civil peril of war's will—
I scan this well and have it oft bethought;
Fiercely aggressive I must make its act,
Yet not transgressive of its higher goal
Which is the restoration of the law.

I am to curb the furious steed of battle
Just at its topmost charge and rein it in,
Lest it may dash to death all government
And rushing riderless to ruin plunge—
Itself the victim of its very hope.

A double duty grinds me in between
As if two mill stones whisked me to their whirl;
The angry clash of danger from each side
Re-echoes through my soul's dread corridors,
Which vista to me far futurity.

The civil and the military have a war,
And I must wage and win the stroke of arms,
Yet also guard against their counterstroke
Which turns its edged blade upon its wielder.
But now behold the fresh emergency!

That Fatal Line between the North and South
With bloody sword-point at Manassas traced,
Seems to be drawn in my commanders too,
Unable all of them to break it down,
Or to pass over it to reach the foe.

Here in the East it threats to strangle us
Within the narrowed Capital itself,
And in the West where stronger drives the impulse

To sweep ahead against the barrier bound,
Buell will simply hold the line and fortify;
Halleck the same; such is my problem now,
To bring to use the military mind
That has much lore and drill and strategy,
But only knows defence and waits attack,
Daring not brave the assault upon the limit
Which is to be surmounted if we win,
And cross the rift dividing us from Union.

Oh for a General upon whose brain
His soldier's training plants not merely lines
Defensive in their rigid fixity!
Who will not stop to play the engineer
Showing his skill in labyrinths of forts,
And lie behind them in security,
Doing the pomp of war and the routine,
Rounding a hopeless zero every day
Which soon must bring us all to bankruptcy.
Would that I might become myself a nought
And sink in universal nothingness
To lose this awful consciousness of woe,
Which deluges within me and without!
And now my darling boy, my dearest Willie
Is writ, I fear, with death's malignant sign
As he lies tossing in his malady;
Methought I saw the dreaded angel's hand
Inscribe upon his brow mortality;

As at his bed-side I kept watch last night
I glimpsed her shears to snip life's fragile thread ;
I think of Ellsworth's youth borne to the tomb
From here, this presence chamber of the White-
House ;

I clasp him in the love of my sick child,
With whom he felt twined in one heart ;
And now comes flitting me a maiden's image—
But I must quit this brooding on mine own,
Lest melancholy venom reason's fount,
Unkeying me for higher duty to my task.
Still when I look outside me at my land
Writhing in its contortions of disease,
Which chasms it between its life and death
And cuts down to its heart Fate's boundary,
There thickens in my soul a deeper gloom,
In which for agony I shout to God :
If thou, Oh Heaven, wert ever rifted with revolt
As is set down upon thy holy page,
Send me a man who evens with the hour,
Vouchsafe a General who dares the deed,
Who dares the Fatal Line at breaking point,
And smites the fetter of our destiny.

Seward enters.

The best news yet! the first decisive blow!
Fort Donelson has fallen, all its hosts
Of many thousands are now prisoners,
On terms of absolute surrender ours.
Southward the other foes have fled in haste,
And cannot well be stopped for headlong flight,
Until they reach a new protecting line.

Lincoln.

Out of the West then comes the first relief!
You pluck me from a tumult of despair
Into whose pit I was just wilting down,
At thought of all this helpless generalship;
But tell me the commander! Yes I know
His name. I have been watching him—'tis Grant.
Aye, U. S. Grant—that spells United States—
Auspicious sounds—let me but hope the omen.

Seward.

He moved forthright upon the hostile works,
He halted not but pushed along his path,
Until he found that which he would assail;
He took the fort and all its garrison
In unconditional surrender—There!
Mark the U. S. again—a presage double.

Lincoln.

I wonder if he be indeed the man
Whom we have prayed for daily with our hopes.

He has the education military,
And has seen service too in Mexico,
Yet has for years been dipped in civil life,
Which may transmute to use the soldier's skill,
Whose bent is else to exercise itself
For its own end without regard to ours.

Seward.

That is vocation's strain in soldiership :
The soldier ever keeps a-soldiering,
He finds his one ideal—that is West Point—
Which drills and dresses all for its own sake ;
His camp, his country, aye his universe
Will but become for him a vast West Point—
His schooling has fenced-in his very soul
That it cannot outsoar what it has learned,
But sticks fast in its forms so crystallized,
That it inspects just for its self-inspection.
Yet we can never do without this school
Which gives the discipline and lore of war,
Though stamping on the mind its boundary ;
Yea, education's self runs on that limit.

Lincoln.

It is a problem which I ponder oft.
When I go out to see M'Clellan's army,
Parading seemingly to see itself,
Drilling for sake of its own perfect drill ;
A peacock large turns the embattled host

Whose object is to spread its showy feathers,
Which arch the sunlight with a rainbow's pomp,
And then lock up their case with task fulfilled.

Seward.

Now we may see beginning of the end
Which has defied so long our searching glance.
In this vast military coil on coil
Which interwinds itself in thousand folds
I never could spy out its head or tail,
Although I knew it had some huge aesophagus
Along its entire length so tortuous,
For it would raven down in greed more men
Than we could hasten to it armed for war,
And still its hunger never was appeased,
But as if starved would cry for more and more,
Like Ophiuchus of the starry belt
Gaping to gulp all Space into his maw.
But here enough! Let's turn our sight from this
Across the mountains to the Western valley
Whence dawns upon the peaks the morning bright;
What think you of the new-fledged man?

Lincoln.

This thought has slowly filtered from our talk:
Grant did again become one of the people
Whom he now leads, has risen from below,
Not from above appointed to his charge.
Thus he has sipped from fountains of the folk

Directly, has taken up within himself
The frontier spirit full of enterprise,
Which lives a life of the initiative ;
And to the drillful learning of West-Point
Who is our learned Professor military
Self-occupied, aristocratic too,
Grant may impart the daring popular,
The forthright will which strikes out for the goal.
Him I shall store up in my memory,
Perchance he is the man—the man long sought.
But ah ! my throb of sudden joy is smit
With the quick counterstroke of anxious pain.
O Seward, did you ever lose a child !
Whose name lay tenderest within your heart
And filled your evil days with love and hope ?

Seward.

Friend, banish nature's gloom to-day at least.

Lincoln.

My boy is sick, my Willie sick to death ;
Let me give out one sigh, one us between.
Even in your good news I feel the fate
Which countersigns in black my happiness.

Seward.

But let us contemplate our full success.
The other victories do not forget—
The lesser blows of war along the line

Which have forecast the mighty master-stroke.
Mill Spring began the breach, the herald first
Of those successive triumphs of our arms;
A battle fought and won by General Thomas,
Virginian of blood and soldier trained,
But loyal to the cause which he deemed right
In spite of kinship, friends, society,
And all the blandishments of his dear State—
That was to me a high heroic deed—
A greater victory than that of arms,
Though he first cracked your lurid Line of Fate.

Lincoln.

With all my heart, yes, yes! but will he stick?
I cannot yet quite banish from my thought
The nature of Virginia's Unionism
Which has inoculated all her sons,
Who will secede unless the State be lord,
As has been shown by her Convention's act—
A Unionism overturning Union.

Seward.

Let your foreboding soul to-day be banned!
And let us mark the sequence of our glories:
Mill Spring is followed by Fort Henry's capture,
Then comes the mighty deed of Donelson,
And soon the blockade of the Mississippi
Is to be shivered by our cannonry,
And then far off upon the Western border

I hear that Curtis drives the enemy
Beyond Missouri's lower boundary.
It is a line two thousand miles in length,
Extending from the Alleghenies here
Quite till the early stretches of the Rockies,
Across the entire valley of your river—
Now see it broken at its leading joints!

Lincoln.

The Fatal Line is breached then in the West!
Not in one spot but all along its length!
And yet somehow we cannot budge our chain
Here in the East—it seems to coil us tighter—
Though we keep adding to our soldiery
And to the vast equipments for a fight
Which is not fought; we shrink back from the dare,
Ourselves oppressed by the colossal weight
Us hampering without and too within.
Seward, as you were reared a native here,
Have studied too and acted history,
Unriddle me the cause of character
Upon this coast whose troops stand face to face?
Tell me why should the old States North and South
Keep still to that fixed line drawn at Bull Run
Each staying on his side in separation,
While those new States in the broad Valley
Trample it to pieces under conquering feet,
And sweep on Southward to their war-lit goal?

Seward.

That is a dark conundrum of the Gods
Whose answer lies not in my vision yet.
So I dismiss it as insoluble—
But I must run back to official tasks
Which I delayed to speak to you the news.

Lincoln alone.

What weighs on me the most sits light on him,
Or is not present to his consciousness :
The outcome of this war already turns
Upon the difference of East and West,
But Seward sees not yet the dawning light.
Long since I have it silently forefelt,
And Douglas hinted to like tenor once,
Which left its pressure active in my brain.
Tell me, ye Powers, having this in hand,
Must not we too upon this salt sea coast
Break through the Nation's minatory bourne,
That Fatal Line of separation's curse ?
Our chief resources have been lavished here
Of men, of money and material ;
The most of each and best of all in choice,
And still there is no earnest stir to act.
Now I shall try to push my Little Mac
To rivalry of Grant and Donelson
And rouse the East to do the Western deed ;
But of such purpose I must tongue-tied keep,
And trounce to silence the comparison,
Lest I excite the demon jealousy
Whom I already have observed at work
And heard him whisper in an undertone.
Some weeks ago when Mac was sick abed
I took command of his Potomac army,
And sought to shape it for its coming move ;

I studied all the books of strategy,
Asked the opinion of his generals,
Planned the campaign which was then to begin,
Reorganized the army into corps,
And their commanders I selected too.
The order to advance would soon have been
Upon my lips, when lo! who doth appear?
None other than our Little Mac in bloom,
A miracle of quick recovery,
Without a trace of illness on his cheek;
He grumbled at the changes which I made,
But took his place again, yet lapsed afresh
To his old lethargy—calling for more—
More infantry, more cavalry, more, more—
And still spell-bound he stands within his tracks,
Week after week, refusing to break camp.

But what to me is more surprising yet:
His army shares in that same character,
Their idol is he, aye too their ideal,
Him heroizing high in admiration,
As if his were the world's chief soldiership,
They dub him young Napoleon risen here
To end the war in rapid victory,
Though he stir not, still unvictorious.
That mystery of power seemeth his
Which can inspire strong love just for his weak-
ness;
He molds his troops all over to himself,

And welds them to him in their hearts' affection
Far down to depths beneath their conscious will.
I have to think this army and its leader
Have some last likeness in a common soul
Whose throb M'Clellan's gift jets up to light,
And makes it pulse in every soldier's breast.
But I must pang me to the sour confession
That I can win nor him in love nor them,
Both seem to feel outside of my world's heart.
Still up I must from mine own maundering self,
Now he must start—I shall command again—
He deems the army his—a plaything huge;
But I shall borrow it a little while,
And make it spin unto its purposed task.
I feel the test has now been put to me:
This army of the East I have to force
Until it breaches too the Fatal Line
Between this Washington and yonder Richmond,
Repeating here the deed done in the West,
That tells me of the goal I have to reach.
Forward M'Clellan! that is now the word
Of your commander here, the President.
But with this push of hope propelling me
I feel a backstroke in my very heart:
I must now go to watch my lingering boy,
Who too seems battling on the line of Fate—
But first here comes a man whom I must see,
Again I am kept back, O bitter lot!
Conferring on the Nation's high affairs.

Attorney-General (enters).

Lincoln.

Welcome, my fellow-advocate from Missouri, and my trusted legal advisor in the Cabinet! What new interpretation of the law bring you to-day, that we may keep our work of violence within civil bounds, as far as possible? Then you represent the Border States, now the pivot of our success; also you hail from that turbulent city of St. Louis, whose fierce factions sometimes act as if they would start to cutting one another's throats.

Attorney-General.

It is my opinion that a fresh Reign of Terror may break out there at almost any time between the foreigners and the natives chiefly, both sides claiming to be Unionists. The situation reminds me of Robespierre and his bloody partisans guillotining all who differed from them in the heyday of blood. My secret information presages a revolutionary madness which starts to devouring its own children. Old Saturn seems actually rising to life again in St. Louis.

Lincoln.

Dear friend, it cannot come to that. Your eyes magnify all just now through a heavy fog of gloom; mine often do so too, I know the cloudy mood.

First let me assure you that ample precautions have been taken against excess; secondly, there is little likelihood of such an outbreak anyhow. If your city were isolated from the rest of us, or were the whole of the nation, the case might be different; but St. Louis is not Paris (which claims to be all France), and Missouri is not the United States, and makes no such pretence. In our political system, if a part gets out of order, the whole hastens to correct the trouble. Indeed that is just what we are engaged in now: the total organism is trying to throw off this furious disease of a part called secession.

Attorney-General.

Well, let the matter pass for the present; I come for another purpose.

Lincoln.

Good! Let me now hear your legal animadversions, which are always excellent.

Attorney-General.

Nay, I am not here for that business, though I be your law-officer. I appear in a new role. I wish to make a personal recommendation, and it is of a man who does not push himself, who is without political influence, and hence is likely to be overlooked, to the injury of the great cause.

Lincoln.

Good Heavens, you too! That stream will yet drown me! But to the matter—tell me whom you mean, and what is the office.

Attorney-General.

You mistake—but let his name be spoken out at once—General Thomas. He won the battle of Mill Spring and started the wave of victories which is now surging in our West from the Alleghenies toward the Rockies. He is the one Virginia soldier of high rank and of great ability who did not go with his State into rebellion. The act is unique and gives him a unique place in History. Mark, I come to you not at his request; he is far from here with his troops on the battle-line in Kentucky or advancing into Tennessee. But I am sprung of Virginia, and I feel that he is one of her great towering characters—he cannot be too soon promoted to a higher place.

Lincoln.

My eye has been on him ever since I noted him here once in the White-House when he made me a soldier's call. I observed that he said little, was quite undemonstrative; I rather wondered what was going on in that massive head of his with its well-fortified shock of hair; I recollect

of quizzing myself briefly about him when I signed his commission as Brigadier-General, and sent him West, as he wished. I confess I liked his choice of a field, it seemed he wanted to keep away from the Virginia danger or disease, which has carried off in revolt so many of her sons who belonged to the old army. Among them he stands forth the striking exception.

Attorney-General.

I tell you, Mr. President, that is the most heroic deed yet done in this war by any commanding personality. It is a mighty self-conquest, antecedent perhaps to the greatest outer conquests, if the opportunity be only furnished to the man. I appreciate him the more because I have felt the same internal conflict, though doubtless not so deep and intense, since I have lived long in the West away from the old Virginia home with its death-like clutch upon the very hearts of its children.

Lincoln.

I think I can appreciate that feeling, I do not deny having a touch of it myself in my blood. But I have had to deal with that strange Virginia conscientiousness, which is for the Union but fights against its maintenance, which dislikes slavery yet battles for it, which mothered our govern-

ment and is now bayoneting its own offspring—and does it in all honesty of conviction. Blame me not if I have some fear of that spirit still, though I would not do an injustice to any one, least of all to a soul loyal under the most trying circumstances.

Attorney-General.

I venture to say that Thomas has already fought with himself just that battle, the hardest battle of this war, and won it. He has broken the fetters of tradition which imprison so hopelessly the Old-Dominion, has defied Family and State with all their blandishments and all their excommunications, and risen to the Nation which he upholds against them if they oppose, as they in this case do. He, therefore, stands forth to me the greatest hero of nationality—greater, I dare affirm, than you or I, because he has had to make a deeper conquest and against mightier odds. We with our fathers had already broken those Virginia chains by migration to the West. We ran away, but he stayed and fought out his primal personal struggle unto victory.

Lincoln.

I shall not fail to keep track of him, though I must be allowed to test him a little further. The Virginia burns on my brain are not yet quite

healed. I may tell you that I am favorably disposed to Thomas for another reason. His plan of campaign was to march to East Tennessee and there organize in arms its Union men of the mountains, and thus to cut the Confederacy in two by a living wall of the bravest soldiers defending their fastnesses along the whole Appalachian range from Kentucky to Georgia and Alabama. I still believe that would have been the right strategy for the whole war. The Confederate headship at Richmond appreciated the situation, and did their utmost to stamp out the loyalty of the hardy East Tennesseans. I urged my plan, but the high military men—Buell, Sherman, Halleck—discouraged it; only Thomas approved and was ready to strike at once. So I naturally have admiration for his ability.

'Attorney-General.'

Yes, military ability and much more—unshaken fidelity to supreme conviction of what is supreme. I wonder at your progress in strategy, Mr. President, and accept it as correct, though it lies outside of my field. But what I would stress to you is not Mill Spring or strategic skill, but that inner deed of heroism in General Thomas, which I can understand better than I do musket and cannon. The typical deed of the whole conflict in

one man—I may presage it the prototype of the war's full course rounded in one soul's experience, the renunciation of the heart's fondest ties in obedience to the highest behest of the Divine Order. Only a Virginian, I hold, could so completely be such a cycle of experience within himself and of such intensity.

Lincoln.

Yes, I have had some dealings with Mother Virginia, and know a little about her inspirations. Indeed I have talked with her in person, face to face, and heard her issue her final edict to me with threats of her vast displeasure, unless I obeyed—which I as representative of the Nation could not, and would not.

Attorney-General.

I am puzzling about what you mean. Spare me your stories, particularly your ghost-stories. At any rate you have not conquered Virginia and you will not for a while, according to appearances—but Thomas has.

Lincoln.

Virginia conquered! Explain me that riddle, which is for me a tougher proposition than a spook.

Attorney-General.

Plainly, then, General Thomas has put down the old Virginia within himself—the first act of

the grand drama and standing for the last, which is her outer subordination. Now for my final suggestion: arm him with the Nation's power, have him wheel about from the West to the Atlantic coast, where he, victorious, will return to her soil, his home, and inbreathe his new spirit into her old body exanimate, endowing her with a fresh incarnation.

Lincoln.

Well, well, I did not know that you were so good a dreamer. Your talk has indeed foretokened much of the future as I catch it at times in glimpses. But you have also called up another line of thoughts to which I am at present most sensitive: disease, decay, death. I beg you to excuse me now; my boy Willie lies in throes of illness, I must hasten to his sick bed-side—I have tarried too long—methinks I hear his piercing cry of pain till here, Goodbye.

Book Fourteenth.

Lincoln's Lament Over His Son.

“The vulture Fate swoops down on me again
And stabs his beak into my heart of hearts
As if I were the new Prometheus.

Dead, O my Willie! son of my best hope!
Housed in thy homeless solitary tomb!
I love my other sons, all of them well!
But thou some how could’st win thy father’s choice!
I saw in thee my boyhood bloom anew
And daringly leap forth into the world
To test like me the limits of thy lot!
My gifted child, thou cam’st my soul new-born
Already in thy days of infancy;
Many a little turn of thine spoke genius!
Ambition of my world was also thine!

I heard thee flash on me one day a word :
‘When I am President, I shall do thus.’
It seemed a momentary lightning shot
Out of the future—now it is all quenched
In human ashes—would I were such too !
Methinks I could lie down with thee to rest
And sleep in love forever at thy side !
But Oh this love of mine—I feel it kills !
It is a fatal thing to him or her
Who wins it whole—I have already known
That my affection slays its dearest object !
Can I forget the maiden of my youth
Whose doom was coupled with this heart of mine,
Whose shadow haunts me still here in the White-
House ?

Last night they both came back to me in dream,
A little boy and somewhat older girl,
I saw them play together happily
And laugh when in their game I took a part ;
I lived with them a seeming age’s bliss,
But when I woke and daylight shut me off
From that fair dreamland where I felt me glad
For the first time in all my days of gloom,
It seemed as if I could not quit that world
In which my love was stilled of all its yearning ;
I would go straightway back to those two shapes,
Would tear to very shreds that slender veil
Which shuts them out from my existence now.

I see them playing still beneath the tree,
The mulberry of lost New Salem village,
Upon the seat which I once plaited there
Of twigs and grapevines for my dreams of love,
Where I would meet the maiden oft in hope,
And where at last I told her all my heart,
Mid clashes of a conflict in our souls.
But from that moment she was fallen ill,
She quickly passed away from mortal gaze,
The early victim of my doomful love;
I cannot help it though the stamp of death
It be upon the life which beats with mine,
It thrusts a dagger to that very heart
Which throbs unto mine own the most endeared.”

So Lincoln let his paroxysm vent
His mood gloom-laden into words which eased
His stress of suffering; whereat more calm
A sacred reminiscense bubbled up:
“With Willie I began to read my Bible
In deeper understanding of its import,
Through pregnant questions of his waxing wit
Which oft bespoke my puzzles more than his;
In answering him I had myself to answer,
To clear his doubt, I had to doubt my doubt.
And so I got to glimpse that Upper World
Which is the burden of the Holy Writ,
Its deepest revelation unto man.

Soon I began its shapes to comprehend
And to identify them with mine own,
Which seemed installed already in the White-House.
The Presences which fill that ancient Book
Are ruling still, I found, our world of Now,
And haunting me, my life and all my deeds;
How glad I read them in the written word!
And verify them in my far-down self
E'en if I think them under different names
And tune their speech diverse from Scripture's talk!
My own self's language I must make myself.
That Hebrew Book grows dearer daily still
To me for its own worth in highest love,
But chiefly it becomes a monument
On which I read my Willie's memory,
Through whom I came to know its overworld
Of guidance to our human goal supreme.
So with its tested texts I must commune
A little every day for uplift sure,
And suffer with its folk in sympathy
Who had to stand their trials for us all.
A Jew was brought to me the other day,
A blockade-runner caught the second time
By Lamon's vigilance in espionage;
His o'erhooked nose mid crispy matted beard
And baleful cockatrice's demon-eyes
Which looked his lie and shot his guilt in scorn,

Made all my body crawl uncannily
As if old Eden's serpent crept along me;
But when he laid his hand upon the Book
And lit his face with look of reverence
As leaves fell open at the page of Paradise
Which I had often read with my boy Willie,
Then begged forgiveness of mortality,
Which was his common lot with Adam's sons,
I pardoned him just for his race's sake,
And for the Book which it has given us
Although he looked like Judas more than Christ,
And stood his People's Satan, not their Jahveh,
Both of which characters they built for man,
To mould himself by them to good or evil.”

So Lincoln soothed his lot in far-off thoughts;
But moments only could he drown himself
In his own waters of oblivion,
For old remembrances still bubbled up.
As he turned to another scriptured page
Pursuing consolation's fleeting cloud,
Behold! between two leaves looks up at him
The laughing image of his pictured son
As if the boy would step to his young life
Again to ask his father for a story.
The parent slammed the covers of the Book
Writhing in agony of new despair;
The Holy Writ itself had seemed to thrust

Back in his face the sorest stroke of time,
Fulfilment of the judgment from above.
The anguished father seized that copied shape,
And welled an utterance from the last founts
Where surged his inner ocean's cataclysm :
“ Could I but give myself the mortal stab,
End this demonic tussle with my Fate
Which bids me live to be the more the fated,
And lets me love to reave me of the loved !
If I were burdened only with myself
And in account for my own being merely
Methinks I could no longer cling to such a clod
Of cursed clay, mad sport of spit-fire Fortune,
But fling it off this minute into nothingness,
Taking my exit from this world's staged hell,
Aye even from my self's own scene evanished.
But a belief I have which anchors me
As 'twere God's own belief all in himself,
And in the Universe which He creates,
That I must live just here beyond myself,
I am not merely I, but the institution ;
Such I am too, by virtue of my office,
And of this nodal turn of History ;
This Nation's being is involved in mine,
So I am faithed to live and then to die
When the full cycle of my task is turned.
If I should slay myself, I would then slay
Far more than just this person of mine own,

Would wound the Future at its very birth
And rashly let the blood of Hope herself.
As I believe in me as sent to save,
I have no right to dare such godless act.
From the assassin's knife I have been spared,
So oft unsheathed for me, but caught and held
By Power unseen, when I would welcome it—
I, ever scotched by Fate, but never slain
Till Time fulfilled brings round my due demission.
On Self I dare not raise the fatal blade
Which Heaven fends away with subtle hand.
Thus conscience as the soldier of the soul,
Doth make me brave to face the living line,
Which I might shrink the coward conscienceless,
Quenching in fear this petty spark of life,
Not viewing in me too the Universe.
So I defy my small self-slaughtering thoughts
Which only see this microcosm's speck
Of mine own little self of being here;
And I shall live not cabined in me sole,
But for the many, it may be for all—
Live the associated life of man,
And suffer with the whole, not me alone,
My pain must be not merely mine, but God's,
And I, God's son, must dare all suffering.”

The sorrow-smitten Lincoln paced his room
Defiant of grief's mortal thunderbolts,

Wresting himself from his own stroke of death
Repeatedly suspended o'er his head,
A swaying battle of recurrent struggles
From which he often sheerly dragged himself
Though the assault would surge and surge again,
With respite brief mid paroxysmal throes.
His stalwart frame shook shivering of anguish
For his evanished boy first in his heart,
With whom was mingled in rare sympathy
His early love for woman at her bloom
Which also wilted down before his view,
Both shapes appearing to his soul upborne
In all the glory of their rosy youth.

But soon another paroxysmal storm
Of strong resurgent death raged in his soul
As if to sweep him off the brutal earth.
There heaved a longing unendurable
Within his breast to pass at once to both
And stay beyond with those whom he most loved.
He would not longer bear life's separation
But step across one moment's boundary
Into another world untimed, unspaced.
But as he sprang upright he was aware
That he was still upon this side of death,
Which he could not invoke unto his aid
Except by his own voluntary act
On which fierce duty frowned a stern refusal,

And bade him back to bear his mortal charge.
Still sighed he for that ideal otherwhere,
With heartbeats rapid not to be withstood
Which throbbed him out the house and down the
street,
Until he rapped upon the door of Lamon,
To whom he had to overflow in speech
When his swoln heart would burst its barriered
banks
And flood his being's stretches far and wide,
With all his inner Ocean's tides of feeling.
Lamon sprang up, responsive to the knock
Which tapped his outer ear expectingly
But touched' concordant, too, a deeper sense.

Lamon.

How strange! for I have been awaiting you!
I knew you somehow stepping on the way,
Else I had ere this started hence myself;
I felt the pull between us in the distance,
If you had not appeared within this trice,
I had set out e'en for my own relief.

Lincoln.

My Lamon, friend, more than the Marshal now,
The Healer of my spirit's deepest rent,
I come to hear thy voice remedial
And soothe me in thy look of benediction.
I would have died if I had stayed away,

I could not rid me of the round of thoughts,
The murderous round of my self-battling Self
Which let me live to slaughter me again.
Already drops thy presence me a balm.

Lamont.

What you have said I deem, O President,
My greatest service to my country's need,
For what helps you and heals, is for our hope,
And yet reward enough it were to me
If I can serve you merely as your friend.

Lincoln.

Thine is the dear oblation of a heart
Which offers all its wealth to save the lost,
And makes itself a shrine where the great God
Descends for worship to the sinking soul.
My sorrow draws me hither at this hour,
I could no longer stay my frame in life,
Or steady reason to her anchorage
Unless I brought me to your spirit hale
To heal me with its ever-flowing health.
My buried boy I would go sleep beside,
He was mine own, my very self of self,
And when he went, I seemed to have to go—
How it doth pang me now to think of him
Beneath his bare chill covering of sod!
He had my bent, my brain, and oh my heart!
Our souls were tuned to common harmonies,

Would sing together in a concord soft;
 They still refuse to dwell inseparate
 E'en if the grave so cruelly says no.
 Lamon, to you I must make this confession:
 My love doth hide a barb of mortal sting,
 And I destroy the hearts I deepest touch,
 When I unsheathe the dagger of affection.
 Ann Rutledge's demise you know about,
 My most beloved son has followed her,
 I scarce can hold me back from going too.
 Sometimes I think when I and Douglas hearted,
 That was his secret doom—he too has sped.

Lamon.

Remember, friend, the task unfinished here
 Which thou alone canst do with Heaven's help,
 Thou hast an oath recorded in the Book of Life
 Pledging fulfilment of a mighty work
 As yet undone, the acme of this age:
 Break not the hour-glass of thy deedful days,
 Remember too the bond of Family
 Whose living ties are still thine own in love.
 And the high promise of thy office still
 Chains thee in duty's fetters to the Nation.

Lincoln.

Both of these ties I know, but they are loosed,
 I challenge death to come and break my bonds
 Which hitch me in this dreary treadmill here

Between the rising and the setting sun.
My love has passed beyond—how can I stay
On earth to be the poison to my dearest—
I dare not love again lest I destroy,
But what is life if it be shorn of love?
Lamon, out of myself I feel the stroke of Fate
Smiting the hearts in which I find my All.
My love is an assassin to its own :
Should I not slay the slayer—e'en myself?
I am the fatal culprit and the judge ;
Why shall I not be just by mine own sentence ?
If I may live, I then must love no more,
Tramp on my heart as bringer of my guilt.
O Lamon, as I pour warm glances now
Into thy sympathetic speaking eyes,
I feel a tremor which darts through my soul
That this my friendship going out to thee
May yet waylay thy life in stealthy lure,
And be thy wreck because thou art my friend—
My love itself thy executioner.

Lamon.

Rest calm ; I could not die a better death,
Than just to die the victim of thy heart,
If I could choose, be that my epitaph.
But let me give condolence by confession :
I too have known such self-undoing thoughts ;
And every man at some unhappy pinch
Has dreamed perchance to quit him of his lot

By getting rid of life itself at once.
We all are Hamlets at some time or other
And balance pros and cons of our existence,
Letting them teeter up and down unsettled.
Such questioning I had e'en in my youth,
And still I am alive to let you know;
Let me commend to you my safe example.

Lincoln.

'Tis well you switch me off my mood to humor,
And slyly let me glimpse of me in you.
Friend, I have had to run from suicide,
And flee to you to save me from myself
Who am in dread pursuit to be no more.
I turn to words my self-upbraiding thoughts
Which triturate me back to human dust.
I lift those words out of my grinding depths
And in them hand to you my daggered grief
Then list your soothing tones remedial
To cure my melancholy's malady.

Lamont.

So make one uplift high unto your own !
Just only think what Fortune now is bringing
To you in joy from out your West and mine !
That strong embattled line is broken there
And fled in scattered fragments toward the Gulf.
Contemplate that for comfort new and hope,
Withdraw thy brooding soul out of itself

And view thy grander task of History,
Which now is taking a gigantic stride,
Whose goal we glimpse through great occurrences
And catch the ken of far futurity.

Lincoln.

All that is right and sane, I know it well,
But can it balsam for me heart-struck woes?
Can it bring back my boy beneath my eye?
Restore the shattered love which Fate has smitten?
And medicine in me that deepest wound
Which pierces to the source of all existence?

Lamon.

But think of those who still are left for love—
Sons still remain to you—and friends like me,—
Leave us not all in blank forgetfulness.
Chiefly a wife you have, a wedded helper,
Who should be hearted in your very life.

Lincoln.

Confessor mine, again I must speak out
The darkest secret of my stressful lot;
Two fealties I have to women due,
The one belongs beyond, to an immortal,
The fountain-soul bestowing tenderness,
The source of all my deeds of charity;
Her image sways unbidden all my days
And on me unaware oft lays her spell.

The other is my mortal helpmeet here
And rules with loyal mind my household seen,
The law's allegiance she in full receives
From strongest sense of duty that I own.
And yet alongside of this lower home
I have an upper home beyond my will,
Which drops down on me by its self-made law.
Lamon, that is to me my harshest lot,
To feel my very love divided in itself,
Tearing in two my heart with double pains,
Dividing holy duty which is one.

Lamon.

What you now tell me in your confidence
Has not been hid from me this many a year.
I know too that your mate has cognizance
Of this true love ideal of yours above,
And cannot always stay her jealousy.

Lincoln.

I dare not blame her for her gusts of passion,
Nor can I help myself from loving love ;
So I endure the ever-bleeding scission.
I try to speak of it the least I can,
And yet my heart bursts out despite myself
To sympathetic converse at the White-House
When mood of memory floods overpouring,
Or when Fate's utterance surprises me.
She marked me mutter once the name of Ann

In sleep as I lay dreaming at her side,
My revery she has too overheard
In tender talk with some dear presence else ;
And once a gossip told her my first love
Whose loss awhile shook reason on its throne.

Lamont.

It is a doom perverse of destiny !
I'll tell you what my dearest uttered once,
As we talked over how we might give help :
“Poor Mary ! her fatality it is
To keep that lost love active evermore
Within her husband's longing memory
By her high temper—that's her fate and his !
She ought to win that specter's place supreme
Herself, by lady's subtle tact of love
Making him choose the real for the ghost.”
So spake me one who knows the way to do it,
And I recount it as a woman's way
To solve a knotty problem of her sex.
But stop, we wander from the task before us
Which it to bring M'Clellan and his army
To break across rebellion's front of battle,
Force him to do the deed of Donelson
Here in the East so well equipped and drilled.

Lincoln.

You well have called me back into the world
In which we live for duty's high performance ;

Tomorrow I must see that start be made
To bring the Fatal Line once more to trial,
If it be drawn of Heaven against our cause,
Or in ourselves that we the weakling be,
Unable to compel our destiny.

Lamon.

That is the note which I have longed to hear,
Now think of Mac and drive him to the deed,
Be not like him of paralytic Will,
Mooding your time away in deedless gloom.
Your trusty messenger I would now be
To bear the mandate of the hour: “Advance”!

Lincoln.

You are a little late in that, my friend;
Already I have ordered him to move
And break the Fatal Line which ramparts Rich-
mond.

Here comes a messenger with newest news:
Hark! Mac is off for the Peninsula.
Another stage begins of this sad war,
One tear I drop again for my lost boy!
My love of him must now rise up to be
A new devotion to the Nation. Farewell, Lamon.

Book Fifteenth.

Lincoln at Harrison's Landing.

Behold now Abraham Lincoln on the Ocean,
Swayed up and down and swirled around about
By tide and wind and wave tumultuous,
As centered mid the warring elements!
The stalwart vessel which is bearing him
From the Potomac to the big-mouthed James,
Reels storm-smit on the waters to its side,
Then straightens up again to meet the blast
As if to fight its foe upon its feet,
Refusing still to sink when stricken down
And halfway buried in the plunging seas.
But suddenly the tempest gathers up
To concentrated rage the skies above
And waves below, and smites trip-hammer-like

Its topmost thrust upon the tottering craft,
As this rolls round the toothed Viginia coast
And turns the point where lies Fortress Monroe
Into the calmer roadstead of the James.

But Lincoln braved a mightier storm within
Than all the roar of Oceanic floods,
Though he was sidelings tossed in body oft
By the precipitancy of the boat.

He pondered what had happened these last months :
His hope of victory had been shattered all,
M'Clellan's army had recoiled from Richmond
Blasting the Nation's grand expectancy.
And now it lay again inside its lines
Peacefully lulled as once at Washington,
Secure behind the gunboats in the river,
Though foiled of hope and shrinking from attack.
So Lincoln was come down to see the troops
And judge in person of the situation ;
His voyage raged a tumult of the soul,
With gloom of nature clouding the horizon,
As he bethought himself of the mishaps
Which had overwhelmed him and the People too,
Pursuing the high end to save the Nation.
In all his play of moods one fact would weave
And drive him to his wonted monologue :
“ As now alone I stand upon this deck
And gaze off yonder up the James,

To where both armies lie with front to front,
What is it that I see most prominent,
Aye the most real thing within my vision,
E'en if I know it sprung but of myself,
Merely an image feigned of mine own mind ?
It is that Line again, that Fatal Line
Drawn by the compasses of destiny
Between the South and North in war enranked,
Which erst I saw Virginia's spectre trace,
And then to run with blood on Bull Run's field.
Here it now winds more deeply rifted still
Though other be the grim locality ;
Behold ! it bends and rears and coils around
Like some prodigious serpent of old Earth,
Whose fell constriction circles our whole land,
Crushing it from Ocean East to Ocean West,
Till it shall swoon in impotence asunder.
Somehow that lissome body serpentine
Will keep its place, though folded round about,
Ever between the two contending hosts ;
If we assail it, then it sways and curves
But will not open at a single joint ;
Within four miles of Richmond once it bent
Beneath our fierce attack, but never broke ;
And now 'tis lying yonder coiled at ease,
Sunning itself after the victory ;
But it will roll its spirals up in wrath
Impassable for us if we dare try

To cross beyond its fiery boundary
For seizure of the Southern Capital,
Which it enfolds within its stout-ribbed rings
As its own heart of hot secession.”

Thus Lincoln talking in his self’s debate
Would hold his inner conferences,
As his staunch craft kept crawling up the river
Round many a bay and bend of twisted stream
Which never failed to prompt his thought’s renewal :
“ And yet if we cannot transpierce that Line
We are a nation losing destiny,
Forever rent to hating halves.
What can it mean, this trial long and bloody,
As if to train us to the test supreme
Of doing the one deed as yet undone ?
For I cannot believe the Powers quit us,
Thwarting the time of its unfinished task.
What is the lacking link in Heaven’s chain
So that we fail to gain our higher goal ?
That missing part I have to find and mend,
Or weakling give myself as conquered.
Our lot seems knotted in one man—M’Clellan !
As much my problem he has come to be
As is the war itself here staggering,
Of whose enigma dread he is the tangle.
His character, his purposes, his army,
What are his instincts deeper than he knows,

I voyage hitherward to probe into,
Though I had thought to glimpse them all before
Through study of our testing intercourse;
This new experience breeds a change in him.
I tried to push him off from Washington
For months and months; he would not budge a step
Until I bade him start by sheer command
And took unwillingly myself his place,
Proverbing that the bottom would drop out
Unless that army dared its destined deed.
I hoped to have him break that Fatal Line
And follow in the Western wake of triumph
E'en if the enterprise be here the harder.
But think it! after these three months and more,
That Line lies drawn out yonder just the same,
Unbroken still at any single joint.
What means this trial, O ye Powers above?
Say, is that rifting token stamped of God?"

The boat swerved round, as Lincoln outward glanced,
And marked the Landing at the river's bend,
Called Harrison's where he had planned to moor;
And still the problematical M'Clellan
He would keep turning over in his mind:
"Sometimes I have to think despite myself
That Mac loves not our central Washington,
And might uncover it of its defence
Till I be prisoner or fugitive.

He does not like the rule political,
Unless it should be centered in himself
Trained to the military consciousness,
Somehow he quite ignores our Capital
To have the first necessity of life.
The European soldiership he types
Whose spirit he ingrains to be his own ;
The standing army stamped is on his brain,
To that all else must be subordinate,
Even the Civil Power exists for it.
Not outwardly alone in sheen's parade,
But inwardly that discipline for war
Has reached and overmade his character,
Till it will brook nought but itself as final.
There flashes on my mind this inference :
The training of M'Clellan never can
Obliterate yon fatal boundary
For it is his, drawn in his brain ;
Transcending it, he must transcend himself
Which all his acts have shown he cannot do.
His drill is physical, yet more of soul ;
The common soldier feels his inner touch
Which upward thrills to highest officer,
So that they all are fused with him in love
From top to bottom of this army whole ;
Courageous it has shown itself in fight
When it is at defence against the foe ;
But it recoils from that offensive stroke

Which means the breach of our fatality.
M'Clellan's very self it seems so like
As if it were by love insouled of him,
Without his person quite examinate.
Can I dare separate him from that body—”

But ere he could be answered by himself,
The boat ground sidelings on the groaning wharf,
Where he commanded that it should be moored
And kept in readiness at his disposal.
But who is that that waits him on the pier ?
M'Clellan with a gleaming entourage
Of officers, the jewels of his staff,
Who flashed their radiance on homely Lincoln
As he stepped forth untrimmed of personage,
With looks beridden by his night-mared thought,
Which told him a much-troubled President,
E'en if he tried to sparkle in response
A care-worn smile and little glints of humor.
The company moves to M'Clellan's tent
Through all the forms of war and right parade
Which showed no droop of soldier's discipline.
When they arrived and both alone together,
M'Clellan made reply to Lincoln's query :
“ Outnumbered we have fought, yes two to one,
E'en more, I think ; and yet despite the odds
I have retrieved my troops from field of danger,
And brought them back within the line of safety

By my own deed of arms ; I owe no thanks
For this success to you of Washington—
You who have done your best to sacrifice
This army true to me whose valor thwarts you.”’
Mute Lincoln listened to the words of blame
And marked their confirmation of his thought,
But soon he wheeled around to leave the tent
Saying a word with mien composed
And tone of judgment’s impartiality :
“Well, I must hear all of the evidence :
So I shall summon me the officers
Of high command in this fierce Seven Days’ battle.”’
“Hold your inquiry here,” M’Clellan said ;
“Thanks for your courtesy, but I have ready
My private quarters on the quiet boat,”’
Spoke up the President and nodded starting
Although M’Clellan sorely urged his stay.

Then Lincoln called the leading Generals
To testify what they might know and think
Of the campaign which had turned out so ill.
They all agreed that this withdrawal strange
Sprang not of a defeat, nor of a need,
That they repelled attack successfully ;
Some said outright they could have taken Richmond
Within the sight of which they lay a month,
Then came the sudden order for retreat
And once to burn the baggage and the trains,

Aye, e'en was mentioned a capitulation
Though from such scares there was recovery.
The whole upturned the strangest history.
No sooner would a given line be touched
With some smart overflow of energy
When the rebound would strike in sudden force
And with it followed a paralysis
From which the army took no forward step,
Although the prize hung tempting in their eyes,
Aye in their reach, so said one General,
If they would but extend their arm in might;
Then Mac became a sudden fugitive,
And sent his hurried word to Washington
Announcing great calamity befallen
With possibility of his surrender.

But mark the telling counterstroke !
Whene'er the foe assailed in turn our ranks,
He was thrown back with greater loss than ours.
If he dared touch in fight the line offensive
He drooped down maimed with sanguinary
slaughter,
From Beaver Dam, Gaines' Mill and White Oak
Swamp,
Up to his last repulse at Malvern Hill.
E'en the most active spirit of the war,
Famed Stonewall Jackson felt the electric shock
'And seemed to lose his bold initiative,

When he ran on the bound at Frayser's Farm
And drew back to himself unwilled.

In truth the victory remained with Fate,
Both sides had been defeated of their end,
If we but look at them in vision whole
Which rises to the view of Power supreme;
That Fatal Line itself was conqueror
Avenging each assault upon its being,
Come its assailant from the North or South.
Such was the blood-stained oracle again
Which Lincoln heard in speech of Generals
Who fought through that Peninsular Campaign
Deposing to him what they saw and did.

The oracle was plain enough outside
And yet some deeper meaning in it couched
Which Lincoln felt he must find out or die.
And so at last he calls M'Clellan too,
Bidding this leader to his boat alone
That he may have a final conference.
The little gorgeous General steps up
In his rank's uniform most exquisite,
Yet with a drawn disdain upon his lip
Which hardly moved a word at Lincoln's greeting,
As he at once reached to the President
A paper written out at length with care:
“This will say all that now I have to tell.”

So he spake up, then begged to be excused
As he had weighty business on his hands.

The President began to read and ponder,
While in an underbreath he self-communed :
“Ah yes! I understand! how good my luck!
Here is a document political
For my perusal handed me by Mac!
Not military, which is his domain,
He pays me back for trenching on what’s his
Or what he deems his own by right divine.
He tells me all about the policy
Which I should follow in my civil acts;
Its tone is somewhat dictatorial
As if my duty better than myself
He knew, and would prescribe it me aright.
Polite enough and yet impertinent—
It shows he has in mind this place of mine,
And thinks on my affairs more than his own,
Not soldiership seems here his first ambition,
I knew he had such hankering before,
And yet I thought if he were once away
From party intrigues of the Capital
He might show forth his better self—but no!
And yet here lies no danger to our cause,
As he is impotent without success;
Failure is not the soldier’s path to power,
Retreat he cannot to supremacy.

Indeed I'm glad he wrote me this advice,
It shows a weakness I must remedy ;
A leader he will be political
And starts with a pronouncement to his own
More than to me, as I see into it.
And a still deeper lesson I can draw :
He writes the Fatal Line within himself,
More plain I see it now than e'er before,
He cannot pass it here and go to Richmond,
Not if his re-inforcement be threefold,
For he must overcome himself to do it ;
Such feat of self-transcendence is not his.
So I shall take this army from the James,
And start it over in a new advance,
And with a leader new brought from the West
Where no such breach infects the soldier's soul.
And still I feel the peril of the act—
To break the bond of love between these troops
And their commander whom they still adore,
Although he will not fight but on retreat.
This mystery of military love
Baffles me—yet 'tis the universal tie—
And little Mac has made it all his own,
Stamping it on the very consciousness
Of every blue-coat serving under him
In these trained months of steady discipline.
O would that I might catch from him the secret,
Transferring to the President's best right

That fire which melts these hearts of soldiery,
But which M'Clellan kindles for himself!"
Here Lincoln rose in longing agitation,
He paced the deck and looked out on the sea,
And sighed to watch its boundless vacancy,
Then swept his glance back to the shore's hard limit.

The little vessel meanwhile had begun
To puff its steamy breath full heavily,
Ready to breast again the Ocean's wrath
As Lincoln's face relaxed to short relief:
"I see now what I have to do with Mac:
He will assert the line against the foe,
But he will never pass it with his forces,
In him that lies not, nor in this army,
As long as at its head he has the sway;
So that my resolution gleams to this:
I shall supplant him, for he can't advance;
But if disaster drives us to defence
And to maintain the line against attack,
Mac is the man, good fortune crowns him there,
The master of his huge machine of war.
Just now the rebels over yonder shrink
To grapple with that soul-drawn Line of Fate,
Which he himself in turn dares not transgress;
Such is his strength and limit of his strength,
Such is their strength and limit of their strength.
Both of these sides stand out alike in this:

Both are clinched fast in fixed Destiny,
And dare not move beyond her bound laid down.
But ah! that means the separation won,
It seals the triumph of Disunion.
But that is what I shall not yield,
And so again I challenge Fate itself
To meet me in this wrestle for supremacy;
Though I be tumbled by it in my grave
I shall defy it to the utter test
Till one or both be sent to last account.
The battle of all battles in this war
The furious headlong combat desperate,
Which keeps renewed again and still again,
I see it well, its wild contorted rages,
It sways between me and that Fatal Line,
Which still Virginia draws upon her soil
As once her spectre with it circled me;
That fiend I have to sabre now in twain
Or else be crunched to death within its jaws.
Such is the one long duel of my life
In which this Nation's death I must destroy
Though it may grip me in the very deed.”

Meanwhile the boat had swung out to the sea
Passing beyond the view of narrowed James,
On the return to sovereign Washington;
An Ocean breeze blew smiling out the sky
And soothed the President's hot furrowed brow

As off into the Future's blue-lit haze
He flung some prying glances well ahead :
"Yes, I shall shift this Line which keeps so fixed
Just here around the hostile Capital
Into some other place of luck, I hope,
That we may start once more to wage its breach,
Which is the blood-splent prize of all this duel.
And yet the deeper question must come up :
This year's vast loss topped out with grim reverse,
Whose poignancy makes quiver every nerve,
What does it mean, what does it say to me,
To all the Nation, from the throne above ?
M'Clellan in his failures and his faults
Is but a means for something greater planned,
An instrument is he—and so am I—
In hand of Higher Power dirigent
Unto His end, not ours, which oft I pray
To know, that I might help the First Designer ;
In all our errors and this waste of blood
I would detect the clouded goal supernal ;
I feel that under discipline we cry
To Heaven—but for what? and to what end ?
I query oft, what signifies this Line
From which M'Clellan quails at the mere touch ;
General though he be, out-general'd
He is at first by Lee and then by Heaven ;
And yet Lee flinches too just at this crossing,
Where over both stands the one Conqueror,

Whom still I have to conquer, else be fated.
But oh! this world of men, this dismal world
Appeareth to me now M'Clellan's world
With Fatal Line enringed everywhere;
And God Himself, the Ruler over all,
Seems to become one vast M'Clellan too
As the last sovereign of the Universe.”

Whereat high Lincoln shrank down in a seat
As crushed to nothingness by his own thought,
Which fell an iron sledge upon his brain;
But swooning through his zero he uprose
Taller to meet his task than e'er before;
Thus he bespoke afresh his newer soul:
“That Fatal Line doth lie in me myself,
And in the People too—I see it now—
It thwarts us in ourselves from the beginning.
First I must tear it out of mine own self
Ere I can work such miracle for others;
Imbedded in the Law and Constitution
It lurks from starting of the Government.
But all the more I must remove its curse
From out the Nation's wonted consciousness;
Then ours, me thinks, will perch glad victory
Sent down to us by the world's overlord
Who now averts his help and sympathy,
And makes the foe's success our punishment
If we advance to drive them from their stronghold.

And yet I must re-think the self-same trait
Is stamped upon our adversaries too ;
They are whelmed back again from all assault,
If they but dare advance upon the limit.
The blue and gray show quite alike therein :
Each quails recoiling from the Fatal Line
Which blazes up a Hell to either side,
Whichever of them undertakes to cross it.
So Richmond cannot come to Washington,
And Washington in turn cannot reach Richmond :
They stand apart and glare in impotence
Across the wall which neither can transcend.
O is that wall built by the hand of God
And so forbidden to us both on high !
Two answers have been given by the deed :
The East says yes, but hark ! the West says no,
If we may take the action as the word.
And I say no, it is not Heaven's work
But is self-made our own infernal pit
· Into whose chasm this Nation threats to fall,
But I am not to let it though I sink.
That Fatal Line itself I shall now grip,
And slay the fiend which rives our country twain.''

The early morn was idling on the boat
Which cut its way through billows of the river
While in the distant sky an outline dawned
Which rounded soon into the Capitol,

Lincoln was looking homeward from the deck
As it would swim along Potomac's ripples,
When he beheld uprise the Nation's seat
Enthroned in sheen of new transparency :
“I see it now, the world grows out to daylight ;
That Fatal Line which I must clinch as death
Is slavery dividing North and South ;
It is the wall of fire which I must pass
Myself by might of will as President,
Though it be fortressed in our Constitution,
And after me lead o'er it all my army,
Marching across it, through it breached to frag-
ments,
Until beneath the tread of soldiery
It shall be trampled out all time to come
The People willing thus with me their Will.”

Already had the vessel neared the wharf
When Lincoln's eager eye was dazzled shut
By the almighty glare of sunlit strength
Shot from the Capitol's unfinished dome ;
Whereat he whispered in himself a prayer
To his Creator lipped in fervency
That he would smite with all his power of office
The Fatal Line dividing slave from freeman :
“Hear me, O God, to thee I throb my vow.
The duty long deferred by policy
I shall outfill it full in nearest time,

For thou dost bid me by thy potent Presence :
Emancipation is the word divine
To which I voice the human utterance ;
I promise thee from broken mellowed heart,
Which speaks contrition mine and all the People's,
Our freedom's fatal bound I shall undo
When I may hear as thine the moment come. "

Book Sixteenth.

The South's Resurgence.

The President.

I have come over to you, Mr. Secretary, to hear the latest news of the long battle which seems to be raging all the way between here and Richmond. Then you know I never fail to be instructed by your view of the situation, even if I may not be able to follow it.

Secretary of War.

Yes, I am well aware that you are too tender-hearted for a war like this. You will revoke my stern but necessary orders, and pardon black criminals whom I would hang or shoot.

The President.

I grant that you are a very needful man to me for tempering my too lenient, perhaps too flabby

disposition. I hope that when our acts are brought before Time's judgment-seat, they may be decided to be a right happy admixture of those two opposing virtues, Justice and Mercy.

Secretary of War.

I am the old Roman: *Fiat justicia, ruat coelum.* Titanic old Latin words of the inflexible law, four of them but enough. I eat them daily to tone myself up with the iron of their Will, which I would put into my heart's blood. I shall not say them in English, they sound too weak and too many.

The President.

I think I understand, though my Latin be shaky—you are yourself their translation, and I believe a matchless one. Still as for me I do not want the Heavens to break down over our heads in consequence of Justice—for what would then become of Justice herself? Now I am tempted to cite you in counterplay, after the fashion of a parrot, four other Latin words which I have repeatedly come upon in my legal reading: *Summum jus, summa injuria.* Translate them for me not only into words but into life, my altogether just friend.

Secretary of War.

I see what you are squinting at again—M'Clellan. My damnation of him holds, I shall not yield,

I shall issue no order for his restoration to command—let worst come to worst.

The President.

There you are again. But see with an all-inclusive eye the lowering situation. After a seven days' bloody fight, and a hundred days' writheing campaign, we have recoiled from Richmond—

Secretary of War.

Within sight of whose spires M'Clellan lay a month, and no positive blow struck.

The President.

I have been studying the man, the army, and myself on the ground. Between his side and the rebel Capital the Fatal Line was drawn; he could not prick a bayonet into it without a strange convulsion in his own soul, as if he were somehow a part of the organism which he was assailing. And not he alone—

Secretary of War.

Your imagination is tricking you again, prod-ed by that unruled sympathy of yours. There is no such Line.

The President.

Indeed! no such Line! When he and his troops, pushing forward in fight would touch it with the tips of their soldier shoes, then would come a

shock and a recoil, which would not only stop but startle him, yea would frighten him as if it were some supernatural warning sent from above not to transgress that bound.

Secretary of War.

Crass cussedness in him, if not treason. I see that you are trying to defend him. Recollect that I shall not—no, I shall not—I shall resign—

The President.

Hold there! Mark, I am trying to understand M'Clellan—that I have to do both for his sake and ours. I must know what he can and cannot perform. Well, here comes Seward, with whom I have promised to take a thoughtful promenade. Goodbye, my invaluable help—but reflect a little on Mercy.

Secretary of State.

(Enters.) Shall we not go in and have a chat with Stanton? I think he needs a little toning up—or perchance down.

The President.

He and I have just had our lesson to-day, which is enough for once. We all are in the midst of a mighty resurgence of the Confederacy, whose troops, having hit ours some hard blows, came also to a standstill. Down at Harrison's Landing I

saw the two opponents as they stood staring at each other in paralytic wonder, neither side daring to touch the other in attack. But the enemy, elated that they had pushed the constricting serpent's coil from their Capital's door, resolve to search some weaker point to breach. The daring Jackson starts down the Shenandoah Valley, driving our blue-coated weakness before him, and flails it into so much chaff wind-blown, chilling Washington to shivers of terror lest he pounce down on us here. Look at it—the dome of yon Capitol seems still to be quaking. Meantime we quit the Peninsula, and Lee, released from guard, trains his exultant legions Northward, till they reach Manassas where a second time a bloody battle is fought along the same Fatal Line—Great God, what can it all portend?

Secretary of State.

Well do I recall that hour a little more than a year ago, when we took a similar walk around the city and shared in the rush and consternation of the fugitives. Not so disorderly is the flight now, but bad enough, and possibly more dangerous than then. The enemy are in better condition and more aggressive. But the main query is, Will the people rise again to the support of the government, as they have already done twice with the most lavish

outpour of their money, of their blood, and of their faith in the cause? They are on trial even more than we, their feeble instruments.

The President.

We shall see, for I shall appeal to them again: I believe they will respond, I at least trust in them. But that ominous Line, blood-bespattered and swaying from place to place in many sinuosities, but never broken, still keeps winding through my vision as the very Satan shutting us out of our Eden of hope. Seward, do you not see it over yonder in Virginia, circling in many a coil between us and the advancing foe, and lashing its wake into ensanguined foam, like the fabled sea-serpent?

Secretary of State.

No, I have not that gift of sight, I may call it second sight. Still, I do not deny that the Fatal Line of which you speak, begins to hover before my mind as a shadowy fact. I recollect when it first seemed to slide into your brain with no little energy; that was when we had conversed with the one panic-proof soldier of the first battle of Bull Run, who unwittingly told you the great secret. Yet it is getting to be a secret open to every eye that can take a providential glimpse.

The President.

Very vivid darts that memory still. But what impresses me most now is the recurrence, yea the repeated recurrence of that Fatal Line here in your East. It seems to be drawn again and again by the Upper Powers to admonish us. I have told you how it flashed upon me, crimsoned afresh with many battles, at Harrison's Landing. And now it rises up with strangely new emphasis on the very same spot where it first appeared. Forward are pressing victoriously our foes; can they be halted at that same limit, as they always have been hitherto? That is now our problem.

Secretary of State.

Evidently the new general called from the West cannot perform the task. Whose is the fault? It is difficult to say. At any rate General Pope is unable to re-establish the Line, in fact he has given up the job. Who can?

The President.

That is the pinching issue at this moment. The new head set on the old body of the Potomac army cannot govern it; organism and brain-work do not agree, but revolt against each other, or at least refuse hearty co-operation. That method will not serve, at least not now. Seward, I must

put back the old head on the old body ere it be too late; there is no other way of meeting the press of the crisis, which closes us in its vice just now. M'Clellan is the spirit which informs that body everywhere, now but a vast disorganized mass of flesh without his controlling presence. Say what you please, he alone has power to direct its members to fresh effort, after gathering it up from its awful sprawl where it lies all quashed out into a kind of human pulp outwardly and what is worse, inwardly—ruleless, headless, godless as if smitten by Heaven's thunderbolts. So on that beheaded trunk I have to clap the head which I lately snipped off. Mac can restore the machine now broken or breaking at every joint. The supreme fact is that he has the army's confidence, aye their love; no other man has that or can get it, for it is not a bauble to be picked up anywhere on the road. Alas, I have it not, and I must take the leader who has.

Secretary of State.

Hazardous to the last degree, but we are grinding in the mill of the Gods, and it is whizzing at top of its speed. But if you re-appoint him, what next? And if he re-shapes his shattered troops, will he then fight—or parade and drill, ever calling for more and more? Dubious, dubious.

The President.

All that I have anxiously weighed for many hours—even the whole night. I shall tell you how I figure the future just crashing on us. Mac will fight if attacked, and his army will too, with vigor—a quality which we have not seen in these recent days. At present a successful defensive battle is our first desperate need, for Lee is crossing the Potomac into Maryland, and must be met at once. He on his side is assailing the Fatal Line—can he break through it? Right at that point Mac can foil him, I believe; so much he showed at least on the Peninsula. Then I feel like giving him another chance. He may have learned somewhat by his adversity—the best school.

Secretary of State.

His appointment will not be well received by your best friends. They know too much about his treatment of you, his open disparagement, his insubordination, yea his secret ambition. Stanton will resign, I am afraid.

The President.

I dare say he will not. Still what you speak of I know and have keenly felt. But I must at present submerge my personal feelings, and even the wrongs done me in the past, and regard only the

Nation's emergency, which pivots just now upon this decision. I am aware that my whole Cabinet will disapprove my act, you possibly excepted—some thinking Mac's re-appointment worse than a defeat or the greatest defeat of all. My party friends will be dismayed; many newspapers will asperse me, my opponents only approving with an ironical sneer. Still it is the single thing to be done in this sudden criss-cross of fate; Mac the organizer, the defender, I must have without a day's delay. Here is the order for his re-instatement.

Secretary of State.

But what next? Our side can never win by a mere defensive victory. The Union divides right on the line of defense and offense, it is your Fatal Line.

The President.

True enough; but we shall first wait for the future to turn present. I shall keep Mac under close eyesight; I shall put a halter around his neck and keep hold of it so that he feels its twitch. At the same time I shall let him understand that I am still his friend, and that I alone have saved him for another opportunity to redeem himself, though his egotism whisper of me: "he could not help himself." Well, that is not so far from truth.

Mac has little power of self-criticism, he cannot say *peccavi*, and then from such confession start on a new career; so I shall have to say it for him and to him, as I do so often for myself. But his mysterious greatness is the power of rousing love in such a vast multitude of hearts; I wonder at this divine gift of his, I would envy it if I dared, and appropriate it if I could. But I must utilize it for the Nation's sake right here, and for his too, I hope.

Secretary of State.

Therein you are yourself again; nobody but you would appreciate that strange love of the soldiery at your valuation. I have heard you say something of the sort before; it has dominated your view of M'Clellan, and made you cling to him in spite of his notorious short-comings. You love the army's love of M'Clellan more than you love the man himself; and now you stake chiefly upon that in the imminent battle.

The President.

Certainly, I deem that love our present salvation. If it were not, I fear we would be lost. In a few days he will fuse the refractory and dispirited army with personal devotion, and mold it into new shape for its task. Yes, I believe in love, in the smallest genuine particle of it, as God is love,

the all-creative and all-upholding in man and in the world.

Secretary of State.

And so even in little Mac. Success to his divine spark in the forthcoming trial of arms. But see where he comes on the moment. I shall slip off and leave you two alone, since here is the White-House to which we have wandered back from our promenade. The Lord be with you both.

Lincoln (alone).

“There was a look of heartiness unwonted
Upon his unlit military face:
M’Clellan’s hope just lightened once his eyes
As he received his fresh authority,
Which I have put into his hands again
In disregard of my advisers here;
Still I obey the counsel of myself
Which whispers me its mandate ultimate;
And then the Presence came with its impression
Sealing the edict which I heard within,
With its last proof unworded and unseen.
I felt the promise of its visitation:
So now the People add their vast response
To my new call to them to send me troops.
I know that Mac was glad to be restored,
And yet he said he felt his neck was haltered
And I by silence emphasized the word
That he cognize the rule above himself
Which he had sometimes held his underling.
Yet he is greater than myself just now,
I would not tell him though I know it well,
He turns the axis of our destiny;
He has the government at his own will,
Mightier than he ever was before
Though he commanded once the entire army;

The Nation's lot is his to make or mar
This week it may be, or this month or more,
Until the outcome of the nearing battle.
Somehow I do forefeel his victory,
The foes too have defied the Fatal Line,
But it is theirs in fact as well as ours,
They cannot cross it any more than we,
Yea, 'tis the South's more deeply than the North's:
So I forecast repulse for their transgression.
M'Clellan too will halt just there, I fear,
As he has done before at that dread Line
Which seems engraved upon his very soul;
Then he will drop to what he was, alas!
Powerless to advance one step beyond,
Clutched by his inner fate with demon's grip.

But hold! I run ahead of mine own plan:
If we hurl back the legions of the foe
Till they retreat across Potomac's bound,
So that we win the name of victory
E'en if it be but a defensive one,
On mine own part I too shall take a step
Forward to what I deem the epoch's height.
I shall speak forth the word Emancipation
And so wipe out that mortal difference
Breaching so long the Slave States and the Free,
And will the country whole make free and one,
Through fiat of my liberating office.

Much have I meditated on the act,
And still must balance me a little while
Upon the edge of keen expectancy
Till the right news rounds out the hope fulfilled.”

Thus Lincoln to himself reiterated
The promise which already he had vowed
To God in his strong heart-scorched supplication,
Only astay to clinch the opportunity
Which was to shine in the first victory.
But as he lapsed into his musing mood,
He felt the impress of that upper sanction
Which breathed him courage for his greatest deed,
To turn an æon of all History.
While on him gleamed that higher confirmation,
He heard a shout pierce through his revery:
“Antietam’s battle has been fought and won.”

Book Seventeenth.

The Second Proclamation.

The President.

I wish a full Cabinet to-day, since the step we are taking will be the axis of the war, if not of the century. Some members are still absent, so permit me to read a passage from this clever book of humor. (*He reads, all laugh but one.*)

Secretary of War.

I can see nothing funny in that—I feel too much burdened by my crushing duties—and I am harrowed by the agonies of this writhing Nation.

The President.

Just of that I would find for you and me a moment's respite. I know that some people take exception to my safety-valve of too much emotion.

But such a passage drives off my devil melancholy, who obscures my vision of the future just when I wish to see distinctly. That sheen of playful humor pierces the vapors of my brooding soul and clears my intellect for an outlook upon what is and is to be. Of such clarification more than ever before I am in need right now. So it is with us all, I think.

Secretary of State.

I confess this medicine does me some good, but not so much. Still every man has a right to fight his own demons after his own fashion, even if certain classic reporters will say of your humor again as they have already said: Behold Nero fiddling while Rome is burning.

The President.

Well, it is my way of putting to flight the Dragon when he eclipses the sun and cuts off the light for my vision of the Higher Powers. But enough of this matter; I see that we are all arrived.

Secretary of State.

No one missing for the supreme assault.

The President.

This is the third time I have conferred with you on the subject of my Proclamation for Emancipation. We laid it aside, in accord with the wise sug-

gestion of the Secretary of State, that we should wait till we could re-inforce it by a victory. That victory has just been won at Antietam, the enemy have been driven out of Maryland, and have fallen back behind their old lines. I wish their defeat could have been more decisive. But doubtless just that incompleteness is a sign that we must take a new departure. I kept my own counsel, but I made a vow to my God that I would strike the first blow for an emancipated Union, when the foe had retreated. You know what the instrument is already; I do not call you together for advice on the main matter, I am resolved. But suggestions about expression or minor points I would gladly have. You are aware that I have been waiting a good while for this pivotal moment, which turns now upon me, and I must act for all time. So I decree the freedom of the Slaves by fiat of executive authority as a war measure for the preservation of the Union.

Secretary of the Treasury.

It almost takes my breath away. I have been known, I might say branded, as the abolitionist of the Cabinet; I wished to strike at slavery from the start as the core of our disease; I supported Fremont and Hunter in their military pronouncements of Emancipation; but this far outstrips anything I had conceived in my most unruly dream.

The President.

Something has to be done and that quickly; we are at the parting of the ways, and we must strike into the new road; the old plan of restoring the Union simply as it was, has been threshed out to its last rag and must be transcended—unfolded into a Union preserved indeed, but enfranchised.

Secretary of the Treasury.

On the whole my choice would be to let this work be done by the military commanders, each in his own department and somewhat in his own way, according to the emergency. The present method seems too sudden, too overwhelming, perhaps too indiscriminate; then I would not except the fractions of States mentioned in the document which still leave so many plague-spots behind and between. I believe in the thing but I question the method. It is a military act; let the soldier do it, not the civil power.

The President.

I may be permitted to remind you that the President is also a soldier in this war, indeed the chief one constitutionally. I see that you still approve your approval of Fremont and Hunter. That is certainly consistent.

Secretary of the Treasury.

Such would be my way at any rate, if I were dealing with this crisis, and I hold it to be the only right way.

The President.

Let me make just here a frank confession to you all. I believe that there are others who might perform this supreme act better than myself. If I could find such a man and knew of any lawful way to put him in my place, I would turn it over to him gladly. But I have no knowledge of any such person, and if I had, I could not transfer to him my office with its sworn responsibility. I have reflected on this matter long and intently, at times despairingly. Often the voice comes to me from without and from within: you are not the man. But here I am, and I shall have to stick, doing the best I know how.

Secretary of State.

Harbor no such thoughts, Mr. President; if you could get out, we would have to put you back—just you. Before these gentlemen, let me distinctly affirm my mature conviction: you are the best of us all. I shall go further and state what I believe future generations will acclaim: of the many millions of us you are the only one—

The President.

Enough of that, my dear friend; your appreciation does me good, even if I am not now seeking an office but rather the opposite. However I shall seize this opportunity to enforce another fixed purpose of mine. It is this: the supreme act of liberation must come through the highest civil functionary, not through a subordinate military officer. It should be the crowning deed of political authority, subsuming under itself all the powers of war. I hold myself very watchful upon this point, perhaps sensitive. The State cannot afford to let a soldier, even the greatest, perform the highest work of the government which he is to obey. Already I have told you that I cannot resign my Presidential function to another, be he civilian or soldier. Already they prophesy abroad and even here at home the rise of the military despotism, the overthrow of the rule of laws by the rule of arms, whose beginning might be a general's manifesto of freedom, which therefore hangs on his arbitrary will. Such a manifesto cannot be permitted—at least not till a dictator has stepped into my shoes and is wielding my pen at the White-House.

Attorney General.

The true doctrine legally as well as patriotically. We all are aware how rife has been the talk of a

dictatorship in the army, especially here in the East, and we have felt the dangerous spirit which keeps spreading such reports, as if they were nursed alive from headquarters.

The President.

I suppose you know the example which I have made of such a spirit among the army officers, who would allow their troops to be defeated for political reasons of their own. If I have one fixed resolution it is this: our government in its present struggle shall not pass through the iron grip of a Caesar, a Cromwell, a Napoleon, or any autocrat begotten of civil war, such as we have seen spring up repeatedly in Europe. Just that fact I am going to stamp upon history as one great difference between the old world and the new. As an instrument of force, the army is of European birth and organization, and in the land of its origin it has often seized the State as its own; we on our side have been compelled to invoke that same monstrous giant of force, but we intend to keep him in his place. Such was the deepest reason, though not the only one, for recalling the proclamations of Fremont and Hunter—generals playing the military autocrat and usurping supreme political functions. And I have had to warn several other military gentlemen with political aspirations not

to attempt anything of the kind. Hitherto the task has not been hard, as all these generals have failed to win any decisive success in the field, without which no great usurpation is possible. Indeed my prayer has rather been that some of them or even one of them would gain such an overwhelming victory that there might be some peril of his becoming dictator. Such a dangerous general I have actually been hunting for in our army here along the Potomac. But I cannot beat up such big game.

No! As the head of the civil and military departments of this Nation under the Law, I alone am the one empowered to issue this Proclamation, the supreme National act of the present war. Moreover it is mine constitutionally to meet in advance any turn toward dictatorship, be it military or civil—a man in blue or black.

Postmaster General.

I wish to say that I am in favor of Emancipation as a principle, and I have always been in favor of it; I sought to bring it about in Missouri, when I resided in that State. Still I question its expediency just now; it will alienate the Union element in the border Slave-States already sorely tried, and if they turn to secession, the scale now balancing will almost surely tip against us, I fear.

Then it will lose us the coming fall elections in many of the Free-States—several governors, and possibly the National House of Representatives.

The President.

Those are certainly points to be considered, and I assure you that I have considered them long and anxiously. Loss there will be, but the greater gain. Moreover those border Slave-States will not now go over to rebellion for the sake of slavery; they might have done so a year ago—I believe they would, hence my very tender treatment of them at the start. They have a hard problem and peculiar to themselves, which may be stated thus: Choose ye between preservation of the Union and loss of slavery, or loss of the Union and preservation of slavery. I have hitherto tried to preserve both, but it cannot be done, and I have given them warning that I would lay a strong hand on slavery, if necessary. I believe that they have made their choice. Besides, with arms in the hand, and once in the fight, they will not throw away their means of defence. In the recent invasion the Marylanders did not flock to the Confederates who expected them in large numbers; the same report comes from Kentucky which did not receive Bragg's liberation from the Northern tyrant very enthusiastically. I have counted the cost; the opposition will abuse

us anyhow, and probably make some gains. That would have happened without the Proclamation, on account of our recent reverses.

Postmaster General.

I wish to re-iterate that I believe in this measure; my doubt is about the present time as auspicious for such a far-reaching departure; I would hold back for a better moment.

The President.

Aside from expediency there has risen and is pressing the question of eternal right, which is now, in my view, enforced by the Supernal Powers. I repeat that I have taken oath that if the Divine Will manifested itself in the approaching conflict by a victory, I would regard it not only as a sign but as a command to move forward to the next great station of our cause, that of Emancipation. For me at least this act has been determined by an influence greater than I am, and now I prepare to fulfil my pledge. So I have called you together not to decide this matter, for it has been decreed by a Power higher than we are, but to help me improve its effectiveness in one way or another. I would have it as perfect as possible in utterance.

Attorney General.

I give my heartiest assent to this new action of yours, Mr. President, I deem it just, necessary and

also timely, though I come from a border Slave-State and represent the same in this Cabinet. As I have to be a man of exact speech, I would like to hear you read the wording of it again, to try if I may catch up any legal flaws.

The President.

You have all had copies of the Proclamation and doubtless have pondered deeply its words and their meaning. Let me read, however, the pivotal sentences of the instrument:

“Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power vested in me as Commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States, in time of actual armed rebellion against the government and authority of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said rebellious States and parts of States are, and henceforward shall be free.”

Secretary of State.

I would like to interject a word just there. This Presidential edict ends slavery not only in the United States, but in all America, and finally in the world. The backward peoples will no longer be enslaved by the more civilized man, even if they have to be put under his training. With such an

utterance of freedom, civilization turns a new corner, and strikes into a fresh road. The World's History will hereafter call this one of her chief nodes.

The President.

After that I suppose you may not want to hear the rest.

Secretary of State.

I wish to add that I advise the immediate issuance of this Proclamation. You know I favored waiting till we were backed up by a victory, which has been won. So the edict is not now the last despairing shriek of a beaten cause, but the first triumphant shout of the new emancipated Union. Besides I may confess to you here that in giving that advice for delay I had another thought in mind of which I did not then speak. I had to consider M' Clellan as hostile to such a Proclamation, but in command of the army which was then on the march against the foe to win the battle. Never before or since has he been in such a supreme position; he held in his hand the key to the future and could turn it either way. With his tendency to take in hand political matters, he might have concluded that the moment for dictatorship had come, using for pretext just this edict as unconstitutional and revolutionary. But when the victory was gained and the enemy fleeing across the

Potomac, his political opportunity was gone, and he suddenly sank again to his military subordination. But for some days, while he was the very keystone of the arch, I shivered as much in fear of him as of the rebels.

Secretary of War.

He ought never to have been re-appointed—I deemed that to be a calamity as great as a defeat—aye, already a defeat.

The President.

The risk was not small, but it had to be taken. The result on the whole has justified the ac.. The Capital is safe, the North is free of invasion, the grand Confederate resurgence is broken, and its waves have dropped back to their old level. And we can begin our task afresh with new hope.

Secretary of State.

I have come to agree with you, Mr. President, that there was nothing else then to be done. But the crisis is now happily past, the military dictatorship, if not dead, is no longer so aggressive. And here I would like to open my heart to you all in confidence: I feel that another sort of dictatorship is brewing, which has also to be met. Congress must not usurp authority outside of its sphere, nor any committee of it dictate Presidential functions. Peace may turn autocrat as well as

war; a co-ordinate branch of government may try to be the whole; a civil dictatorship seems to be as tempting as a military; the legislative can seek to be the executive, as well as the reverse. I know it, for I have been a Senator myself.

Secretary of the Treasury.

Pooh, pooh! no danger in that direction. Pure fancies are such suspicions against our Senatorial fellow-workers in the great task of the Nation—products of diseased imagination, or possibly of terrified conscience.

The President.

Enough on that point at present. We shall, however, keep an eye on both sorts of dictatorships, not omitting to guard against our own dictatorship, with which we have often been charged, and shall now be again. Deeper and far more sacred than any personal struggle for power is this work for the Emancipated Nation, upon which we have entered, and from which there must be no retreat. We shall next see whether we cannot break through Virginia's Fatal Line of blood with help of the Higher Powers.

Secretary of State.

I dare prophesy that this turn to Union enfranchised as well as preserved begins a new cycle of the ages.

Secretary of the Navy.

I feel as if we might conclude this greatest session of our service by singing the Doxology, the favorite Puritan hymn.

Secretary of the Treasury.

(Apart.) What a chaos! Yet typical of all that is now done here! Starting with Artemus Ward and ending with *Gloria in excelsis!* Oh for a guiding statesman in this welter!

The President.

Now to the loftier issue. Be adjourned.

Book Eighteenth.

Mother Virginia Again.

The Cabinet of mortals vanishing
Sped forth the White-House, each unto his stint,
Yet downward curved beneath the weight of
thought,
And shrinking to a startle in his look
As if he heard the tocsin of a planet born,
A younger earth flung from the fathering sun,
And hurtling its new path amid the spheres.
Lincoln had stalked off to his lolling rest,
And laid out at their ease his chorded nerves
Till every joint lopped lax with flaccid flesh,
Untensed from the fierce strain of his resolve,
And left his members piecemeal strewn astretch.
So gave he up his centred organism

Submissive whole to gravitation's will,
That he become one with all Energy,
And share in the high Genius cosmical,
Tapping the flow of the creation's seed
Which trickles through the brain of him who thinks,
And wins immortal voice from mortal tongue.
Thus he repos'd in reverie wide-eyed
That opes the portals of the overworld,
And lets it fill our human consciousness
Which then can hear and see with organs new
And integrated somehow with the All,
Not limited to what is here and now
But sensing true the Time's transcendences.
Fain would he catch the echo of the Folk
Responding to his voice of new enfranchisement.

Thus had he watched awhile in waking dream
Processions of the souls of men and things,
Which flit about in vision's vestibule
Or loiter with a look from out the cloud,
When suddenly slid standing there a shape
Before him which he recognized at once,
For he had seen and talked with it ere this,
His form he raised up to salute the ghost
With mien of a becoming dignity:
"Welcome—I know thee now, Virginia,
Thy visit I remember of last year;
Since then has rolled a mighty revolution

Of Time's huge wheel which still keeps whirring off
Events like fragments of a new-made world,
Whereof to glimpse the grand artificer
I seek, that he may help me train this chaos,
Whose strifeful elements 'tis mine to order.''
The specter threw defiance from her eyes,
Though not so domineering lipped her tones
As when before she issued her command
Unto the President as her own vassal:
“Again I come advising for your good,
And for the common human heart still tender,
I hope, in spite of all its bleeding streams
Which each of us has made to gush in hate
Out of the other's veins in battle tapped.
But let me say the scope of this fresh visit,
And pipe at once to you my ghostly voice.
Revoke, I bid, this Proclamation new
Which frees our slaves by arbitrary will,
And gives our hearths to servile savagery,
Lest we be forced to hoist in self-defence
The mortal flag of black impending death
To every wretched captive bloused in blue
Who may be taken of your soldiery.”

Lincoln responded unalarmed in mien:
“O No! so far your scath would not hold out,
Although your Senate may in heat propose it.
Besides you soon will dare bethink yourself:

Retaliation is a two-edged sword
Gashing the user just in using it.
I would not kill for what another did,
And you will not, I deem, when you cool off.
But weigh! from Union now emancipated
Think not I shall go back to it enslaved.”

To Lincoln’s words rolled a reverberation
As of commingled strains not in agreement,
Applause and hisses at his hardiment.
Virginia still looked forth her mettle proud,
And told in fiercer tones her fresh demand
Sharpening her speech’s point with finger tipped:
“Revoke the clause which lets our slave be soldier
Fighting his master on equality,
To win his freedom by his arms in hand,
My cavaliers enranked against my blacks—
The thought humiliates more than defeat.”

Then Lincoln crossed his furrowed sombre face
With smiles agleam which lit his kindly words:
“You will be thinking soon that selfsame thing,
Embattling servitude with lordliness
In line together, and also proffering
The boon of freedom to the blackest skin
As prize of service in your sinking cause.
I only have anticipated you,
And seized the future’s forelock in the date;

Still you will strive to overtake my act,
Your war-hope trends that way—do you not see it?"
Reflective turned Virginia's spectral face
As if confessing in her utterance:
"I know some of my soldiers harboring
Such thoughts of policy, but I do not,
E'en if the cannon-ball cleave me in twain,
And leave my body gobbeted forever."
Thus as she spoke her very face looked rifted
With line of separation through her form
As if a double specter she might turn,
Whence came, however, but a single voice:
"Division of me in two States complete
I know for my undoing you have planned,
In violation of the sacred pact
As worded by the Constitution.
From that desist—I warn you solemnly—
Although you split me into warring halves
And dog each on to lap the other's blood,
Till both expire—I shall not be co-erceed."

Condolence wrote its lines in Lincoln's look,
As he replied her deed's own consequence:
"That is what you have done yourself—just that—
Unto yourself by your secession,
So that it turns upon you inwardly;
I never could have wrought that by myself,
Nor could the power of the government.

Dual has been Virginia long in soul,
But thus in body she is realized
Through her own act of scission, not through me,
Who long have prayed her not to turn her knife
Upon herself, and tried to stay her hand.
Yea, even in your ghostly self I seem
To see partition run quite through your form
Whose doubleness doth grapple with itself,
The one side reddens with a victory
The other deathly pales to a defeat—
The haricari of Virginia.”

The sworded vision of the President
With words which cut forthright down to the core
Where lay the fester of her deep disease,
Enforced the spectre to a writhing shout
Which voiced itself high in a counter speech
Whereby she imaged too her spectacle,
With her forefinger pointed at the picture:
“Do you not see yon quivering line of blood
Channeled between the North and South a chasm
Unpassed by you, impassable forever
The boundary laid down by Fate itself
In many a battle of antagonists?
Whenever you have crossed that red-lit line
Whatever force, though vast and valorous
You may have hurled against me on my soil
Striking in vengeance at my Capital,

You have been smitten to disgraceful flight
By deeds of our courageous soldiery,
Then further driven backward in retreat
By unseen Powers scourging sinful trespass,
Till you have quickly crept to safety pale
Again behind your guard of battlements,
As racing in God's panic from old Death.”

Whereat once more she indexed what she meant,
And Lincoln for the moment ducked his head
Before that spectral finger pointing Fate
Straight in his face and voicing its dire rune,
For he had watched that self-same crimson flood
Rise on his sight with its forbidding chasm
Both after the defeat and victory.
In his dumb interval the ghost resumed
Observing well the power of her image:
“Be witness in that dread ensanguined line
Of a wroth God's decree repeated oft;
Forbear the new attempt to pass that bound,
Acknowledge your transgression hitherto,
And recognize the separated Nation.”
Whereat from out the Southern skies afar
Rolled broken detonations of reply
Which muttered yes and no among themselves.
But from the thought so worded came a shock
Which thrilled to speech the silenced President
Who felt a cut down to his keenest nerve:

“Never! Impossible! not till my corpse
Itself be cast the final sacrifice
Into that gulf which cleaves the Union!”
The phantom still kept knelling him her words
Which rang a toll sepulchral to the ear
Of Lincoln as he shuddered at her gaze:
“Seek not to thwart the one behest divine
Writ in the blood of many thousands slain;
Upon Manassas at the very start
How could you help but read it plainly there?
And the Peninsula re-shouts the lesson
Which tells you how you can not cross the Line—
The Fatal Line drawn round to guard my Rich-
mond.
And now again that sanguinary bound
Has been laid down with mightier emphasis
Upon the soil gore-thirsty of Manassas,
Where lies your Union bleeding mortally.
What means this repetition of the blow—
That sign re-iterated from above?
Stay with yourselves in holy name of peace
And leave us to ourselves in our own way.
Know that the earthly ruler doeth best
When he confirms the mandate from on high,
Obeying not his own, but Heaven’s mind.”

Lincoln looked inward with his seeing soul,
And still was mute at what he spied in there;

For he beheld the same the spectre spoke,
And sought to find the meaning of the portent,
When that shrill voice commanded him afresh :
“Dash not against the limit God-decreed
In stubborn wrath of mortal insolence,
Lest the next time thou be not spared of Heaven,
And thy fixed punishment defeat and death
For wanton lawlessness to God and man,
With subjugation of thy blinded folk
Told in the ruins of yon Capitol.”

Lincoln let fall his chin upon his breast
And breathed a deep-heard sigh of confirmation
Which hardened soon to words responding thus :
“Oh yes, I have oft recognized that Line
Within the last twelve months calamitous ;
I shall confess the grisly fatal image
Which has been gashed upon my piteous brain
Until the stream seems running my own blood
As it spouts up and down and round about,
Yet always stayed between the Capitols,
In curves from the Potomac to the James.
But you on your side also must have seen
That self-same image in its counterpart ;
For you, whenever you have hit that Line
Have too been halted and hurled back defeated
And have re-crossed the gory boundary,
To tread again secure your old domain.

You cannot pass it though we grant you brave,
That limit holds you in as well as us,
Antietam is not one week old as yet:
Do you not know what happened to you there?"'

Virginia hesitated not in speech
She sprang as for a testful opportunity,
Her face gleamed e'en a smile victorious,
As she tacked on to what the speaker said:

"You have now given proof for my demand,
Supporting it with your own argument,
Which shows the line between us drawn eternal—
Divided by a power greater than ourselves,
Which we must fight if we dare quit our own,
And storm in war the battlements of Heaven.
Thus either of us doth provoke God's wrath
By violating what He has decreed—
The separation of us in two Peoples."

The spectre noting Lincoln sunk in thought,
Deemed him unworded by her battery
Of shotted arguments, perchance unwilling,
So she still spoke with mien victorious:

"The Upper Powers have confirmed secession;
Do you not mark how they will not permit
That either side subdue by arms the other,
But hold us balanced still in gain and loss?
That Line, the seen unseen, which separates
Is guarded by angelic sentinels

Who have thrust back from their impartial watch
The strong transgressor, be he you or we.
Obey the plain decree celestial
Printed on many a bloody battle-field
And stop this godless enterprise of war
Which but repeats the discipline of death.
How plain is the hand-writing on the wall,
Needing no prophet to unriddle it!
Or let me play old Daniel warning thee,
That God Himself is a secessionist.”
Whereat she stretched her spirit-finger out
As if she pointed at Belshazzar’s doom,
And traced it on the gloomed White-House wall.

At once tall Lincoln rose up to his height,
Straightly himself he statured from his stoop,
And pitched his words forthright, as he uncrooked :
“If ever the high Powers ordered me
To do a deed as their vicegerent human
And sealed it with their own impress divine,
They bade me issue this new Proclamation,
Driving my pen, though mine the mortal hand,
Dictating in me e’en the flow of words
Which spell the Union’s new enfranchisement.
That was the call which I cannot recall,
It was the spirit of my people too,
Now ready for this act of liberation,
It was the voice of Time in History

Unfolding Nations on the way to freedom,
And this the farthest flight recorded yet.
A Union new we shall be fighting for
Henceforth with courage and with hope renewed,
We shall by arms soon breach the Fatal Line
Which hitherto has barrièred us so long,
For we refused to do the Will above,
Which sent defeat to be our discipline.
But now by Heaven's ministers o'erwatched
We shall march forth to future victory,
E'en on the soil of States the lordliest,
Be it mother of us all, Virginia."

Whereat again reverberant the welkin
Began to murmur thunder o'er the land
From sea to sea and aye from age to age,
For strange it fell the farther off the echo
The more it swelled with roll of rising years.
Once more the dreamy spectre woke to words
And syllabled its side with energy:
"You cannot pass the bound which God has drawn,
Without repulse more bloody than before—
The added penalty of insolence
Toward the decree supernally laid down.
Heaven cannot be stormed from Washington,
Our gunnery is voiced of Providence."
That view the President had well bethought,
His answer flew from off his tongue at once:

“Not in such way I read the Powers now
Who rained upon us their calamities;
That is their mode of upper discipline:
When e’en their people baulk to do their Will,
They scourge their own up to the highest task
Until the right be done—eternal right—
Which now I feel I voice in this emancipation.
Well do I know the deed is fruit of war,
The fiat of my military might,
Which yet must be transfigured into law—
The law organic governing our land.”
In placid mien the spectre gave a twinkle
And lipped a whispered word replying thus:
“Have you not heard that Lee has crossed the river
Back to his State and there re-drawn the line
Which parts and ever will, the North and South?”

Whereto the President gleamed his response,
With ripples through his furrowed wizen face:
“Have you not heard how that dividing line—
Here the dead-line of our fatalities—
Has in the West been broken through and pushed
Far down the spacious stream-bed of the River,
Where it is held in spite of fierce assault
Ready to sweep still onward to the Gulf?
Mark well! to the old States alone
Belongs that Fatal Line impassable
As yet, but henceforth to be passed.”

Amid these words a distant rumbled voice
Upheaved out the horizon of the West;
Disdain the shadow shrugged and looked its scorn,
Whisking askance to fling its haughty scoff:
“I care not for the West, the wild and wilful West,
Degenerately childed of my loins,
Ingrate for all that I have given it.
Here I shall live and die, on Old Dominion’s soil,
And leave the Border to its barbarism.
But now I shall give out another note:
M’Clellan holds once more upon his side
Of that same Providential boundary,
And on the other side sits Lee opposed:
So is renewed the Line which you name fatal—
Just as they stood before Antietam’s blood,
Before the massacres Peninsular;
Your General confirms all that I said,
And clinches by his deed my argument.”

In Lincoln’s face the gleams flashed into gloom,
As he backed up resolve with forceful words:
“Then has the Little Man too reached his limit,
I gave him one more chance to cross that Line,
For he and all his friends besought the test.
If he has let the enemy escape,
Establishing anew the old division
I shall remove him—be it said and done.”

Virginia almost gave a pitying look,
As 'twere upon her God-forsaken foe:
“There you assail the ordinance divine
Proclaimed by cannon’s mouth on field of carnage,
Which now booms out our sacred oaths to Heaven.”

Lincoln responded solemnized in look:
“Another ordinance divine I hear
Bidding me clutch and slay the wrong
Which you would sanctify and make eternal;
The Devil can’t be canonized by cannon.
I grant you show your conscience in your acts,
Likewise I conscience know in what I do,
Though it be quite the opposite of yours;
Above them both there is an arbiter
Who judges of their suit at his tribunal,
And will in his good time decision render,
The last, from which there can be no appeal.
For this war is not only one of arms
With loud-mouthing roar of smoking gunnery,
But stiller is the conflict of two consciences
And deeper, for they point the bayonets
In ranks opposed and speak the word to charge.
A lesson ’tis which I have had to learn:
For I deemed once I had within me seated high
The Judge supreme of all I thought and did
Without the final umpire over me.
But now I know there tries our causes both

The last Justiciary of consciences
Though these be all sincere and true and brave
Ready to yield up life as sacrifice.
That is the real Chief Justice in whose court
The Highest Law, which is the Law of Laws,
I would implead for this my Proclamation.”

Thus Lincoln spoke, with look to light upturned;
Whereat the room was filled to overflow
With the vast Presence of a confirmation
Which seemed to stretch from Past to latest Future,
As if it would o'erarch all History.
It blent its harmonies with Lincoln's words,
Whose voice it took and filled with Time and Space
Ubiquitous and sempeternal raised
Resounding down the record of the ages.
A mote recalcitrant Virginia stood,
Discomforted her mien and attitude,
Though borne along in her defiant spite
On tides of that great Ocean cosmical

But Lincoln felt the impress strong enough
To utter to it what lay on his heart:
“Spirit, unbidden thou hast come again,
At the right moment now to help me win,
Virginia, lest she undo herself
Undoing her best work in wrath—this Nation.”

The ghostly dame heard Lincoln's word, but saw
not

To whom it was addressed so loftily
Up in the viewless air of vacancy;
More haughty still she whisked her spectral skirts,
And shot her bitter glances into words:
“Your way to plaster over self-reproach
For violation of the Constitution,
Which you did swear to keep by vows to Heaven
With hand-clasp on the book of Holy Writ!
But you will crash your stubborn skull anew
Against the wall of Fate which I have reared
Upon my soil and manned with my defenders.”

But Lincoln still upbreathed his high petition:
Urging anew the one last overlord:
“Canst thou, oh spirit, not make me thy hand
To wipe forever out that Fatal Line
With which Virginia now has threatened me?
Or how it may be done engross my soul
With the true signature of thy great Will?”
The phantom lady raised apparent eyes
As if she too might say a prayer above
In counteraction of the President:
“Your spirit's favor I disdain, defy;
That Line, God-drawn, must stay, though gurgling
blood.”

Upon such menace grim, firm Lincoln stamped
A fresh re-iteration of his will:
“Your Fate I shall compel—such is my task—
E’en though I cap it with my tragedy.”

Responsive to the Presidential vow
There rolled into that spectral conference
A mighty shout inlaid with tramp and song,
The echo of advancing soldiery
As if the Folk itself was on the march;
Then into it and with it also moved
That Presence of Eternity now timed,
Filling it with the all-compelling power
Which rules the round of human deeds through
ages,
In which Virginia’s shade drooped vanishing
Yet left her whispered swoon: “The Line still is.”

The apparitions both had slid to space,
When Lincoln seized his pen and wrote strong-
willed
Selecting a new General for the work
And bidding him to cross the Fatal Line,
But he recalled himself and thus bethought:
“I would not wrong M’Clellan in this act,
His recent service I esteem the highest
Which could be rendered in that moment’s crisis.
First I ~~must~~ go and see him in the field,

Till then I shall put off the change once more,
Indeed I would retain him if I can.
And then that love, that army's love for him
I would not smite—granitic as the hills
Though as an air-built ghost intangible.
It works a Titan's force in Nature's self,
I cannot harm it, nor can I win it,
It is M'Clellan's own, inalienable.
I oft have tried to spy its unseen way,
Or woo its secret by some sly surprise;
Its fealty stays firm to its ideal,
My nearest problem now is just that love.
Off now I must, to scan Antietam's field
Where lies the Nation bleeding with its wound
Which floods the rift from both the North and
South,
Thy crimson line of Fate, Virginia—
I shudder at the sight—still go I must.”

Book Nineteenth.

At Antietam.

First Soldier.

Now for a little rest after the fight and a good camp smoke. A great victory! and our Mac is again on top, where I think he will now stay. Lee is retreating, he has recrossed the Potomac and got back into his own country again, where we shall keep him hereafter.

Second Soldier.

If that were only the end of the matter—but really it is a new beginning of the war, quite where we started more than a year ago. I wonder if this seesaw is to continue—how long and how often? That is not going to restore the Union if we always have to come back to the place we started from. It is a Devil's circle and we are in Hell.

First Soldier.

Cheer up, comrade, and enjoy our success. Let us give a hip, hip, hurrah! for our victorious chieftain who has driven the enemy out of our territory, hurling him back to his own soil. Now we may sing a triumphal song; the invaders have been met and repulsed.

Second Soldier.

True enough, and I rejoice. Still I do not quite like the idea of their soil not being ours, and our soil not being theirs—it is all our one country. You seem to draw a boundary in it, making it two countries, which is just what we are fighting to overcome, just what they are fighting to establish. To my mind your words declare unwittingly that the other side has won even in our victory.

First Soldier.

Fine hair-splitting is that; good enough in theory, but worthless in practice which is our task, and which requires two battle-lines, and now they are drawn again. Say what you please, there is a North and a South, Secession and Union, which are arrayed against each other along two deeply separated fronts—the one here, the other over yonder.

Second Soldier.

Aye, but that is not the whole of it. If our side truly wins, we must not allow the foe to fix perma-

nently his hostile limit against us; that is just what we are to break down, else what is the use of fighting? I have heard that Mac had some 30,000 fresh troops, which he did not put into battle or employ seriously for the pursuit of the retreating Southerners. Why is that?

First Soldier.

I know that the authorities at Washington are sending out such news over the country for the purpose of injuring M'Clellan, who is so beloved of us all, excepting a few grumblers like you. I suppose they are getting ready to remove him again—he is too great for them. I dare tell you what I believe: Mac will yet have to take into his own hands the government, before anything gets done. Some call this treason, but it runs a common rumor among us private soldiers. What a botch did Old Abe make by his interference during the Peninsula campaign! If Mac could have had his way, we would now be in Richmond.

Second Soldier.

I see that you, like every enlisted blue-coat in this war, are an accomplished strategist. That is, indeed, our right as American citizens. I am engaged in fathoming a piece of strategy myself, and I shall tell you what it is. I was not in the recent battle, nor was my division, though we were lying

almost within gun-shot eager to rush in, as we heard the roar of the firing; nor have we been sent in pursuit to any purpose; something seems to be holding us back, or at least leaving us idle; what is it? Such is my strategic problem, which seems not to be present to you, nor to most of your comrades here.

First Soldier.

I trust all that to Little Mac in whom I have complete confidence. I hear that the President is coming out to pay us a visit. I wish he would keep away, and leave Mac alone, who would have ended this war months ago, if his hands had not been tied. I confess to another disgruntlement: that fresh abolition document of the President, which was printed a day or two ago under the name of the Proclamation of Emancipation, is not at all to my liking. It changes the whole scope of the war for which we enlisted.

Second Soldier.

Therein again I shall have to differ from you. It has been plainly shown that slavery stands in the way of Union, and so must be wiped out. But is Old Abe coming out to see us here? How I would like to march in review before him and to catch a glimpse of his long legs again, with his big feet in the stirrups. He is my man of the whole set, civilians and soldiers, especially since that great pro-

nouncement of an enfranchised Nation. We can win now because we ought to win. How dearly I want to see Lincoln, who at present stands above all men for what this war means!

First Soldier.

Not to my notion is his mount—too uncouth, too unsoldierly. How the little M'Clellan surpasses him in lordliness and magnificence when they are seen together riding along the ranks of the well-drilled polished soldiery! Besides Mac shows himself the ruler.

Second Soldier.

He has wonderful magnetism and I see that you are magnetized into a kind of spell-bound adoration. Though I wear the blue, I am still an American citizen with my own vote, which I cast for big Father Abraham against your Little Mac.

First Soldier.

No voting is necessary now, though it may come to that issue literally. I confess to a political feeling about M'Clellan as well as a military; there is an undercurrent of the sort in this army. Of course we dream our hero as President when he shall come to his own; such is our final promotion of our leader.

Second Soldier.

I have heard of that; evidently the two parties

are already aligning themselves for the Presidential year. But enough! do you hear that bugle? It calls me to parade—I hope to prepare for Lincoln's reception.

First Soldier.

Now look up to yon tented hillock, it is M'Clellan's Headquarters. There he is walking to and fro in contemplation; great thoughts are doubtless surging in his head—soon, I believe to be realized.

Second Soldier.

Let me take a good eye-shot at him from this distance—perhaps I may hit his tune. Look how jerkily he steps! He must be lashed by his own reflections. No small amount of agitation is busy in that little framework of his; I have my guess what it is about.

First Soldier.

He is merely taking a brief round before his meal. How little do you people know his greatness! Make a complete revision of yourself—and now be off.

M'Clellan alone.

Saved worthless Washington again I have!
Though but the fortress of my bitter foes
Who risk the Nation in their hate of me!
Thence comes a growl in spite of my great deed,
Because I did not capture Lee's whole army,
But let it march in peace to its old haunts.
Fools in high places! weening that they know
The art of war, and daring to prescribe
What I shall do in my domain of peril
From their safe perch inside the Capital!
Stanton, trained only to his legal quibbles,
Though set above the soldier by his office,
Bids me at once pursue the rebel troops
Who still outnumber mine, as I believe.
But I am glad of this Potomac's flow
Which they have placed between themselves and me,
And left our soil free of their presence dread.
Mad Stanton is the evil genius throned
Which seeks my ruin and the Nation's too.
And Halleck hither sends me his command:
A Western failure brought to Washington
Who with a hundred thousand men once took
Corinth, manned with wood-guns but not a man;
He would perchance now have me do the same.

I know that Halleck is a soldier trained,
Books he has written of war's theory,
And given lectures on grand strategy,
Telling about the things he could not do.
I read his bookish stuff unpractical,
But only recollect that I forgot it,
So pointless that it would not stick my brain.
And now as Chief-of-staff to the President—
An office made to get him out the way—
He gives me a short job to capture Lee,
As if that were an easy holiday
To hug the savage bear which might hug me,
To pluck ripe fruit which he could never reach;
And if I could I doubt if it were best.
I whisper to myself my secret thought:
Too great a victory might be our curse.

Then all this talk which stabs from everywhere,
Comparing me with Grant, the Westerner,
Has its first source from dismal Washington,
Which city I have saved to be my fate.
I have to read and even hear this scorn:
“Now take a Donelson here in the East
And duplicate for us that great success,
Breaking the hostile line as yet unbroken.”
So runs the senseless jargon of the hour,
Dreaming to conquer armies with a phrase.
That Grant I ordered twice to be cashiered

For drunkenness, but our wise President
Came to his rescue with a wretched joke
And with a fling at me saying "He fights"!
As if I never fought and would not fight.
Some even hint that Grant should be brought hither
Whom I avoided taking on my staff
When he in writ applied at Cincinnati;
But he is fitted only for a fight;
At West-Point trained, he quite has lost its polish
Lax in the academic discipline,
Without true soldier's ceremonial,
Shunning the sheen and pomp of arms' parade;
With troops whom I have moulded to my soul
He would not be at home e'en if he came,
He could not take my place in their affection,
I drill them till they love me in their drill,
Another would be hated for such forms.

But of disorder Lincoln shows enough,
Making the White-House a boor's paradise
Where every clown and crank have access free
To jibe a jest or pour some panacea
For curing all the time's big deviltry.
I knew him when I lived in Illinois,
I saw him challenge to debate great Douglas,
Saw how he pandered to the populace,
By prating freedom and by telling stories
Till the rail-splitter of the Sangamon

Was borne up to the Nation's Presidency
Whence now he sends his proclamation forth
To free the slaves 'gainst Law and Constitution,
To which he swore his last obedience.

And so the rift between the North and South
Has widened out far greater than before,
Whereby the fight will grow more desperate
And Union be henceforth much further off.

Down at the Landing on the River James
When he was there, I gave him best advice
Against such actions mad, and wrote it out
Although I marked he deemed me out my sphere
In meddling thus with matters of the State,
For I have noticed oft his jealousy
If I would dare a word political;
I was to keep my military cage
Lest I might break out thence and take his place.
Suspicion of me grinds him day and night,
For his own weakness has called up a word
And sent it under-breathed throughout the land—
A word which fevers him: dictatorship.
I say he is himself the cause of it
Though he would throw the blame on other people,
Especially on me for thinking how
We must in the last pinch restore the Union,
Though he be the chief obstacle—just he.

But mark! here on a gallop to me rides
An orderly still roweling his steed
And bears a message fresh from Washington.
I look upon his coming with disgust,
Another numbskull interference I forecast.
If they would only leave me to myself
And let me carry out my grand designs
Of which they have no brain for comprehension,
Equipping me with men and means enough,
I soon would put a period to this war
So long drawn out by the incapables
And still to last in rage more bloodily
Unless I somehow touch the helm of State
And sway its drifting to the right direction.

What is this news I read? The President
Is coming out to visit us in person,
And will inspect his army in the field
As chief Commander of it over me,
Whose higher soldiership I must obey.
Heaven! what an invasion damnable!
The soldier's outlet is profanity
When he is filled up to the brim with spite,
Which I as right church-member have essayed
To dam from its bad overflow somewhat
By regulations worded to my troops;
But now I feel myself like saying damn
If I again must brook that President

Who comes out hither smelling all about
To find some little defect in my work
And meanly fault me for not marching faster.
See there! he comes! I mark his long-legged strad-
dle
Upon his plunging steed, his high pipe-hat
Unlike the tilted blue-cap of our soldier.
And at his side his satelite detective.
Out of such view I slink me to my tent.

Book Twentieth.

Lincoln's Return From Antietam.

Lincoln (alone).

A jangled world outside me and within !
The Lord himself seems out of tune to-day,
And all the antique music of the spheres
Is grating godless in a cosmic clash !
I have just seen the field of victory
And strolled along Antietam's rivulet,
Till where it ripples with Potomac's flow.
I have conversed with men and officers
Who have outbraved the foe in winning fight
Though thousands lie in stillness tombed,
Or gasp their wounded lot in hospitals.
And yet despite the triumph of our arms,
There is a discord rising from our own ;

I found M'Clellan tuneless to his task,
The army too I felt in undertones
Of dissonance with our new policy,
In subtle echo to its leader's will
Which seems its organism's own throughout,
With thrill electric to his unvoiced self—
His the one soul of that one massive body.

Oh that I might get hold of just that love
With its weird fascination over hearts!
It even works a charm upon myself
Against myself, and strains me to resist it,
When I but touch its presence magical;
It pulsed me when I came within its lines,
I half relented when I faced M'Clellan
And listened to his voiceful sympathy
Which tranced his words into my very soul
Swooning away a moment in that flood
Of personality's own ecstacy:
I cannot shake me of the prophecy
That such a man with Love's primeval dower
Which the Creator stirred to make the world
Must somewhere have his part within our task,
And needed be to heap the measure round
Which is fulfillment of our destiny.
Fain would I utilize such merit rare,
Participating in the deepest bond
Which holds of God the universe together.

I would transfer it to myself—oh how!
Or to another, but I know him not—
A General whose skill throbs love,
The soldier's love defiant of defeat.
A following of citizens belike,
Whom I would win as mine, M'Clellan holds—
Those who will keep the Union as it was,
Where lies the Nation's turning-point just now
Into the order new of world enfranchised.

United North against divided South
Till we may rid this of its sore division,
Has been, since Douglas spoke his great farewell,
My striven policy for braver concord
In which all partisans might sink their strife
To face the common peril of the country.
Alas! that peril sounds again the omen,
The omen dread which wafts me shivers chill
Along the nervy flushes of my brain:
For at its hint I see once more the Fatal Line
Streaming around through all my imagery,
As if a Fury bent on clutching me
Just at the worth supreme of all my deeds,
Would pluck me in the act of flowering,
And throne me on new heights of tragedy.
M'Clellan is now standing to that Line,
But there he shrinks to move a step beyond,
He dares not tiptoe to a fearful look

Into the chasm of that monstrous spell
Lest he behold himself in counterpart.
He has the Fatal Line run in him too,
He is it now—he has become it here
Under the transformation of his genius;
And my next task is to encounter that,
And cast it out ere this great army moves
Its works of war across the Fatal Line
Whose coils I must undo or in them die.

And yet that army's love I have to smite
If I cut off its leader from command;
The very thought of it is torture's hell
That inwardly I groan in agony;
For what is deepest in my spirit's hope
And drops me purest balm for sorest fate,
The giver of my only blessedness,
The love of man which fuses many men,
I have to stab within these soldiers' hearts
When I shall sever them from their ideal,
And break the common bond which centers there.
Such is the counterstroke in my own self:
The blow I give unto that army's Love
I feel rebound in hate upon mine own,
And I must bleed for those I have to wound,
I am the penalty and guilt in one:
And yet that is the deed I have to do;
M'Clellan is not now the minded man

To help restore emancipated Union.
The mighty cleft in it he cannot close,
For it is in him deep as in this land
And with him it will rift his soldiery.

While at his tent we sat amid his staff,
Lamon began to sing a little song
By my request to ban my inner discord,
Which had crept over me in my sad visit
And more unstrung me there at those headquarters.
I marked the echo in the featured looks
Which glanced at me their high-bred irony ;
The music made the larger dissonance,
Whereat we two arose and bade good-bye
In courtesy I hope, but yet in flight.
And as I quit the camp, the Fatal Line
I saw within it and on front of it
Aye running through it everywhere,
More plainly writ than I had ever seen,
And read the letters of the gory lesson
More deeply crimsoned than they flashed before,
Until I felt the pressure of the Presence
Which bids me act by its supernal hest,
And which I dare not shy in misbelief :
That Upper Cabinet of mine it was
Who first decreed to me this Proclamation,
And stamped the impress of it on my soul,
So that it always stood before my inner eye

Unfurling everywhere its lettered scroll
Which I must spell and syllable within
Until the very words I learned by heart,
And wrote them down upon my document.
This then I read my Lower Cabinet
Who gave approval to the writ,
With words of argument on this and that,
But yet it was not theirs, it was not mine,
We were the channels of that higher stream
Which from above flows down through mortal men,
And bears their deeds on to their final goal,
Whose thought is wreathed in higher harmonies,
Yet to be played to future generations.

But what a shock discordant grates below,
And still convulses me between two loves,
The one of which must throttle now the other!
It is a task which rends the heart in two,
And makes the brain reel round at its own stroke!
That Line I must start to eliminate,
Although M'Clellan be it in himself;
But can I find another General
So free of it that he can smite it down?
Once I have tried but soon I had to shrink,
And to restore the leader whom I dropped.
It is a hazard dread which shudders me,
But I must dare again else we are lost.

Meanwhile let me but watch the star of hope
Which twinkles still its smile in Western skies,
For there the South's resurgence has been stayed
And beaten back beyond its broken front;
But I must still wait for the coming man
Whose dawn perchance I spy, O may he rise
And in the sheen of deeds strip off obscurity!
So I indwell this world of dissonance,
Hoping to choir it yet to music sweet
When these harsh days have jolted off to chaos.
But hark! another jar begins to grate—
Not now the untuned military one—
Its sound is different, yet threatening—
It must be found and to the surface brought.

Book Twenty-first.

The New Dictatorship.

Postmaster General.

Before this new sort of battle begins fire, I wish, Mr. President, to have a little consultation with you in advance. Of course I am going to take a hand, naturally on the side of the Cabinet, against this attempt at Senatorial domination. It is significant how every branch of Government, or the individuals at its head, will usurp the supreme power, in the present time of upheaval. First appeared the trend toward a military dictatorship, both in the East and the West. That was perhaps to be expected, as the soldier must be professionally an autocrat; I know him for I graduated

at West-Point myself. But now rises the monster of a civil dictatorship, on the part of men who are makers of the Law, and should not be its violators.

The President.

Yes, everybody seems to want to get into my shoes, thinking it an easy task to manage the government in a time of civil war. I at least am finding the job a hard one, the holiday of it is yet to come. The Senatorial Committee which proposes to dictate who shall be members of my Cabinet, has not escaped my attention in the past months, though their descent upon me this morning was somewhat sudden. Their attack was chiefly directed against Seward, and to a less degree against the rest of you, but indirectly it was aimed at me, being planned to break up my Cabinet and leave me helpless without advisers, and the chief departments without official heads. Seward, having heard of the movement, had already sent me his resignation.

Postmaster General.

I see, I see. You then summoned your official family and warned us of the impending onslaught, bidding us get ready to resist. I believe I shall enjoy the fight—a civil duel between two branches of the Government, executive and legislative.

The President.

Undoubtedly, but let me warn you. Both sides are for the Union, yea of the same political party which supports the war. So I must not let the said committee break up my Cabinet in its own interest or in that of some possible Presidential candidate; such inner disruption would give encouragement to the common enemy. Still I must not alienate that committee, which is composed of the Senate's ablest men, and all of them holding our political creed. Therefore restrain your bellicose disposition, do not make a permanent breach between us and them, we shall need them.

Postmaster General.

I do not deny that I have my good Scotch broadsword ready for those who would hamstring the executive Power by legislative usurpation. To my mind a Senatorial dictatorship is far less excusable, because far less natural, than a military dictatorship; the soldier has to be arbitrary, the lawyer ought to be always legal. Chiefly because of that distinction I passed in my career from the army to the law.

The President.

Hold, my friend of legality; on this case also I would cite precedent. The gentlemen composing this Committee are deeply grounded in English

jurisprudence from which ours is derived, and have imbibed more or less of its character. Now the whole movement of English History, I may say, of the English legal consciousness, is the limitation of the king's power by parliament, that is, of the executive authority by the legislative. The result is that Parliament is declared supreme, having practically usurped all the other supreme functions of Government. In fact the process is still going on: the House of Commons has been trying to swallow that of the Lords, and may do it yet. So I hold that this Senatorial Committee, composed as it is of Anglo-Saxon lawyers, have simply manifested the Anglo-Saxon legal spirit, as is has come down through a long evolution of centuries. To be sure, personal ambition plays in, and lust for power, and factional hate; still in its very nature the legislative mind will rasp against the executive power and try to curb it—

Postmaster General.

And suspect it of all sorts of schemes of usurpation, which is just what the legislator is doing himself. I can find the traces of this spirit in our own Constitution made of course by English Americans. Have you never noticed how full is the legislative section, compared to the executive section, and how carefully fenced off and buttressed on all sides?

The President.

Now that you speak of it, I remember. So you agree that these men are simply acting out their inherited consciousness, and cannot altogether help themselves. You see I am trying to understand them, and I have to trace their conduct on lines deeper than they themselves are aware of. Mark, too, I am a lawyer, and seek to appreciate the legal spirit on the side of its greatest worth. We cannot do without it, as this is a government of law, which is just what I am trying to save.

Postmaster General.

I cannot help adding that you have several lawyers in your Cabinet, who seem to be touched with that same spirit of limiting executive authority—at least your authority. And that is the chief difficulty before us in the coming battle. I am afraid that some of the Cabinet, instead of standing to the fire-line, and fighting with us, may go over to the enemy. Not one alone, but possibly more. Indeed it is my opinion that this whole turmoil started from certain members of the Cabinet intriguing with the Senatorial Committee, even if this has its own ambition for greater power.

The President.

I think I know whom you mean. But let me whisper to you in confidence what I am eager to

get hold of—it is Chase's resignation to counter-balance that of Seward. I tell you in order that you may be careful not to spoil my game, but to help me to success. Then I can keep you all with me, and thwart the Senate Committee, without offending its members seriously. Privately let me say to you that this whole movement is gotten up in the interest of Chase as the coming candidate for the Presidency. But I cannot dismiss him; I am aware of no man equal to him in his present office; then I must not permit him to get outside of the administration of the government, where he could do much harm, possibly head a new party in opposition. I deem it the highest test of my capacity that I be able to keep together the two extremes, conservative and radical, Seward and Chase, and make them work in co-operation. The union of my Cabinet is the first won Union. Many are the dictators whom I must meet—Cabinet dictators, military dictators, and now legislative dictators—

Postmaster General.

Well, here they come in a body; the whole Committee, nine of them, have passed through the gate. See Sumner leading the way, watch his high-chinned dictatorial strut, his air is that of taking possession of the White House—

The President.

Let forbearance rule in our words and in our hearts. I deem it a very critical moment, fraught with greater peril to our cause than a battle with Lee. Stay by me, you are the one to defend the Cabinet, but let there be moderation. I do not intend to say much, I shall sit as judge before both sides, the accusers and accused, and let each of them assail the other and defend itself, till both of them even themselves out in charge and countercharge, and are ready for a mutual understanding and new peace. Moreover, I wish to see which side our good friend, the Secretary of the Treasury, will take in the fight. I think the storm will clear the atmosphere generally. Soon the Cabinet will appear, I timed them some minutes later than the Senators, who will be surprised when they find themselves face to face with those whom they have accused.

Postmaster General.

A great scheme indeed! It beats anything my father ever did in the way of political strategy. Already the Senatorial dictatorship cannot dictate, but is thrown back upon its own defence. How I pulse to give it some home-thrusts!

The President.

Again I must beg you to put a guard over yourself. We do not wish to estrange these Sen-

ators but win them, or a majority of them, who are certainly not devoid of insight and patriotism. But here come your associates of the Cabinet, as they agreed to do this morning at my solicitation. They know what is in the air evidently.

Postmaster General.

I have been observing them for some moments through the window, as they slowly and rather meditatively trudge along the walk. Especially I am watching Chase, who lags alone in the rear; he is plainly non-plussed by the situation he feels himself in. There! he stops in his tracks and lapses into a brown study. He seems debating with himself whether he will continue his trip or turn back. He acts as if he felt himself caught in a trap. See! a fellow member, Welles, returns to him and takes him by the arm. A fresh advance!

The President.

You may take your place among the Cabinet; be alert for defence, but remember my warning! The Committee looks astonished at the presence of their culprits, who propose not only defence but attack. I see the Attorney General is ready with the Constitutional argument—I shall enter and set the ball a-rolling.

Postmaster General (alone).

The episode is over, though it lasted several days. So I have come out to Silver Springs to take a little rest in the country, and to think back on the drama which has turned out a veritable comedy. Most amusing was the scene when Lincoln actually snatched from Chase's hand the latter's resignation when he had drawn it from his pocket and was still holding it in a kind of doubt or possibly menace. So Lincoln had the two resignations of the two hostile counterparts of his Cabinet, Seward and Chase, and could balance one against the other, keep both in his Cabinet, and handsomely nullify the Senatorial interference. The most skillful political device that I ever saw played! Lincoln could not contain himself, but sprang up elated with one of his very rare looks of happiness, and plumped out perhaps his best rural metaphor: “Now I can ride, I have got a pumpkin in each end of my bag.” So we could see Lincoln with his long legs getting a-straddle of his donkey again in peace.

The President then ordered both of his resigned ministers to resume their customary official duties. Seward obeyed with alacrity, since he at once saw

through the whole game; Chase with hesitation and sullenness, for how could he help feeling completely outwitted and defeated? But he was unable to find any excuse for quitting his post; such a desertion would be his political decease. And the legislative usurpers shrank back to their haunts utterly thwarted; though one of them, Trumbull, stayed behind for a while, to frame to Lincoln some excuse for such conduct toward an old friend and benefactor, or possibly to declare his penitence. So ends the civil dictatorship, be it of the Senate or of the Cabinet; Lincoln makes it conclude itself in a comedy. Ha! Ha! Tee Hee!

But my laugh cannot last; here are the awful details of that butchery of our troops at Fredericksburg; by it we are whirled into the bloodiest tragedy, and the sigh, yea the tear will bubble up. My God, how long! Utter incompetency of military leadership! If Lincoln's political strategy could somehow be transformed into military strategy, the war would be brought to a close in a month or two. Impossible it seems out of this huge, well-disciplined Eastern army to evolve a General. Still another trial will have to be made; Burnside cannot be retained. But who is to succeed him? Alas who? Hooker is spoken of, but hazardous will be the experiment with a man of

his known habits. Very strange but doubtless significant is the sterility of this great army in producing military leaders. And still after Emancipation's offering victory averts her face. What can it all mean? But I must quit this brooding, else I shall drop dead.

Book Twenty-Second.

Lincoln's Curse.

Lincoln (alone).

Fredericksburg! Chancellorsville! Oh why!
Anew that Fatal Line is drawn in blood
Against our cause, and deeper gapè than ever
Between us and the goal of all our toil;
The crimson flood runs full to overflow,
And always flings us back upon our bank
Whenever we dare try to cross its bound.
Not merely once the lesson has been trounced
Into our very souls with reddened pain,
But twice upon us falls the penalty
Again, until we swoon for loss of blood.
But why defeat's ensanguined repetition
Aye, this repeated repetition's Hell!

Is then that Fatal Line some stronger God
Who can defy our will to pass beyond
And e'en punish us for such attempt?
The Proclamation of enfranchisement
By which I thought to win the Upper Powers
Has not to us lured once a victory,
But rather has it brought the deeper scourge
With sting of doubt in Providence Himself.

M'Clellan could not budge the boundary,
Which, fortressed high as Heaven's battlements,
Within his soul rose up impregnable;
And so I had to shift him from command.
But whose the talent which can take his place?
That army never riped a general,
The monster somehow could not grow a head
Which all might see and shout: "Behold the
leader;"
Though many men of stellar shoulder-straps
With soldier's lore and patriotic zeal
Performed the daily tasks of mediocrity.
At last I diced a choice at hazard's throw,
Burnside I took, a worthy officer,
Who did not wish the place, and voiced himself
Unequal to the opportunity.
Then followed fast the bodeful clash of arms
With fresh inscription in the gore of thousands
Which drew the Fatal Line at Fredericksburg.

And still no leader bulked above the mass,
The soldier's genius fell down self-defeated.
So I once more must grip the bag of luck
And try to draw the prize of generalship.
I chose a man more famed for fight than headship,
Addicted to his dram and blatancy,
Which I dared hope by warning to correct,
And ban all obstacles to his success.
But at the very point of Fortune's sword
Our fighting Joe turned fightless suddenly,
And coupled with his name: Chancellorsville!
Where was rewrit in crimson characters
The fated lesson of the parting line,
To scholar us with bloody repetition.

Our army has again been whirled aback
In lurid energy from its assault
Upon the wall between the North and South
As if that were God's sacred demarcation.
Are then the Presences whose messages
Impressed me with their signature divine
Fate's weaklings of the age's furious clash?
In agony I cite them to my bar
Of judgment for their broken promises,
Who breathed me hope, though voiceless and un-
viewed
Then whelmed me to this maelstrom of despair.

Or has that Upper Cabinet of mine
Which has so seemed to guest at home with me,
Abiding here at will in residence
Been but a lying choir of spirits damned,
To take advantage of my melancholy,
Perchance a cohort of black devildom
Sent to abuse my gift of fantasy
Unto perdition of my cause and me?
That higher Presence to whose hest I list,
Invoking it to guide my very soul
And to direct my world's last governance,
May be old Satan's self in fresh disguise
Of airy shapes from mine own mint of brain,
In which he masks the better to beguile me,
And thus to snare my soul in his false wiles,
Slipping into my prime creative self
The deeper to bedamn me and mine own.

The devil may obsess my consciousness—
But hold! I must not spin so far and fine
The gossamers of dread imagination;
I must bethink me of this striking minute;
Our army marching up Potomac's valley
A monstrous megatherium headless crawls,
Like some huge coil of the primeval globe;
Almost unbrained is its huge organism,
Colossal in its courage and its strength,
But dangerous to friend and to itself

Unless concentrated newly in a head,
Which will direct aright its mighty limbs
Against the pressing foe who has resurged
Afresh across the battle-line to us,
And makes for Maryland and Pennsylvania.
I know not what to do, and yet must do
At once, to meet the quick emergency ;
M'Clellan's name is in those soldiers' hearts
And often rises to their lips outspoken,
And I may have to call him back again—
Not yet—that cannot be—though it may be.

All of my famous Generals have failed,
So I am forced to try another way,
A fameless officer shall be my choice
One who has done high duty unobtrusive,
For nought remains but this blind lottery.
And yet the Fatal Line I fear in all,
So deeply charactered by time and wont
From its first birth within our Constitution ;
It has been graved on the Atlantic mind,
Which now must meet and crush its very self ;
Against it I have launched my Proclamation,
Erased the bound between the slave and free
Under the seeming favor from on high.
But now I dare to oath my creed Satanic :
The promise to me is not kept above,
I doubt that Upper World to be the truth :

I challenge God here to defend himself
Before my high tribunal of Judge Conscience ;
I make the charge proved by these new defeats
Right in the face of our great edict cast,
The Lord Himself is a secessionist.

And now there speeds this way the shadowy flight
Of Presences invisible but felt
Which hover over me in mockery
As I toss on my vision-breeding couch.
But longer I shall hearken not to lies,
Though they be vouched for by the Powers of
Heaven.

Avaunt ye spectral falsehoods, brood of Hell !
With guile ye make yourselves pretend to me
My honest ghosts with messages of truth
Sent from supernal sources down to earth.
Henceforth I ban ye with my execration
From every nook and chamber of this White-House
Where ye have lodged unbidden in my home
And found the way unto my faith and heart,
The ministers of Pandemonium.
Ye sneaking guests disguised in welfare's mask
Away ! I shall with you no more commune,
Betrayers of my holiest confidences,
I damn you with my black infernal curse
Which is your own hurled back from me to you :
Forever I abjure all intercourse—

Stop! hark! a rap! a strange response to me!
The door unlatches by a mortal hand.

Lamon.

What means this maddened talk—with whom and
why!

Let me dare enter, though without your call;
At home I felt the pull to you in haste,
And could not stay myself against the hand
Which gripped my heart and fain would drag it
forth

Out of my very breast into your presence.
But say it me, why such confusion here,
As if you had been wrestling with a fiend?
I heard you storming loudly with yourself,
For I can see nobody here who speaks,
And yet your voice was pitched in high defiance
Which toned a challenge to the very death.
Tell me who was it?—I would lend my help.

Lincoln.

Lamon, I feel the better for your voice,
It calms my mood already to renounce,
And soothes me to a higher resignation.
Your tone of friendship lays my stormy sea
And charms the rage in every drop of blood.
But oh the paroxysm seethes again,
I feel myself in a revolt with Heaven
Who has refused to seal my cause with victory,
Belied his promise given for my edict—

Lamon.

Hold! turn away! Keep off your thoughts from that!

How wild your look distracted rolls above
As if you dared to death what rules beyond!
Your glittering eye-balls from their inner pit
Are flinging flakes which scintillate Inferno.

Your straight lank hair stands lodged upon your head

Like cornfield curled in a tornado's gust.
O Lincoln, turn your face unto your friend:
I would give help to ban your hidden foe,
I never saw you looking so before.

Lincoln.

Already you have fortified my heart,
The music of your voice has gleamed me hope;
Still I must fight to flight my devils own,
You cannot put them in your Marshal's prison,
Or hunt them to their hell with sword and shot,
As you can treat the plotters of rebellion.
Alas! I am the rebel now myself
Revolted from the guidance of the Gods.

Lamon.

For such arrest, O friend, I bear no writ,
And still I hope to serve you in that war.
Grasp me in hand, and call me now again
Consoler, mediator, priestly friend,

As you have done before in nighted gloom ;
Bethink yourself once more of your great task
On which the ages pivot just to-day,
Remember, you belong not merely to yourself
But to the cycle of all History.

So free yourself from your own brooding self
And live the timeless life of very Time,
Of it, in it, and yet above it whole,
The guerdon winning thus of immortality.
Methinks your steadied eyes speak readiness,
Your mien has even smiled acceptance new
Of that high order which we call divine.
Let us come down to work which is at hand
And presses for decision on the spot.

Lincoln.

With all my might I force me to recall
Myself to Earth from the despair of Hell.
But must I start again vain labor's task
To heave the stone of fabled Sisyphus ?
No longer myth but realized in me,
Who after more than toils of Hercules,
Have to begin anew where I began,
And make the same old round in streams of blood,
Damned to the gory treadmill of Moloch's rites ?

Lamont.

Withdraw your mind from here and think the West,
Where Grant is sweeping down the Mississippi,

And soon will cleave its chains until its mouth,
Breaking the final link to make it free,
Wherewith the Fatal Line out there is gone
And soon must weaken here to its last break.

Lincoln.

That is the word to stanch my bleeding heart,
And drip me balm for my infernal pains.
O Lamon, you have charmed my solacer
Out of the clouds of my environment,
Which hid from me the promise of the Valley,
Though I was born and reared its very child.
The rainbow I can see across the mountains;
You point the arch of iridescent hope
Which yet will reach to overbend us here,
Crossing forever our fixed Line of Fate.
And now methinks I see the chosen way
In which the Upper Powers wisely move
Unto their goal of due accomplishment.

Lamon.

Let us then seize the hope's recovery
To meet the crisis roaring round our gates.
Lee wheels his soldiers to Potomac's bound,
And seems to mean invasion of the North.
Our army is deploying steadily,
To shed attack wherever this may strike.
Valiant and yet unfaithed of leadership
It grimly marches to its duty's trial.
Is there to be a change of Generals?

Lincoln.

The sorest word in all my dictionary
You tongue me in that petty vocable!
A General! A Leader who can lead
Our soldiery across the Fatal Line
And break the fetter of our destiny!
Him I have sought in every avenue,
Have prayed for his descent from God above;
But he has not come down at cry of mine.
And so I picked from out the mass a man
Of whom you scarcely have once heard, I deem,
Meade is the choice whom I have hazarded
To buffet Fortune's frantic waywardness—
A Dame most damned for her frivolity.

Lamont.

That army will repel the foe's attack
Of its own instinct's push, though leaderless;
Such is its might defensive of its line;
But when it turns to make assault beyond,
That is the pinch which seems to crush its will.

Lincoln.

You see the point on which my problem turns,
Has turned, and will perchance to-morrow turn.
But now we have to wait the clash of arms
Watching to-day the keen arbitrament.

Lamon.

Enough! I must make haste to mine own cave,
From which I tread with guards the underworld
Which has its lightless eyes for seeing night.
But when your mood shall overpower you,
My Lincoln, cast your sight on your own skies
Where you will glimpse above your prairie's tilth
The star-lit hope of rising Hesperus.

Lincoln (alone).

I feel the guilty weight of crushing sin
As if God's universe piled on my heart,
So that I droop me down in supplication.
Ye Upper Presences, come back, I pray,
Whom I have cursed in bitter blasphemy
When I saw not the better way ye wrought
To win the Union's consecration,
And so unfaithed me of your governance.
Mine own short sightedness I dared too much,
Too sudden was my fool's expectancy
That through my edict of enfranchisement
The Powers above would interpose down here,
Perchance in fight appear in their own shapes,
As once the Gods came down from skied Olympus
And warred upon the plains of towered Troy.
Thus we were to behold with human eyes
By one supernal blow dealt out of Heaven
The Powers breaking through our mortal Fate,
Just at the battle-line so often fixed
Against ourselves with bloody demarcation.

Now I confess my sin's foolhardiness ;
I ought not dare direct that higher world
Which has its own procedure and its goal,
Whose providential order I must find
And then I humbly may co-operate.
Already I can glimpse me reconciled

With the world's government and with myself;
I see the light along that Western River
Whose flood upbears our Nation's destiny,
And flows on hope's own highway to the Future.
Here I repent me of my hasty doubt
And do unsay me of my blasphemy;
I shall pray back my Upper Cabinet
Which I in curse had banned out of my life,
Hearting it with a new-born hospitality.
But hark—a note of the last clash of arms!
The newsboys shout: a fight at Gettysburg!

Book Twenty-Third.

The Fourth of July, 1863.

Seward alone.

Suspense! suspense! that is the demon whose infernal bat-wings overhang to-day our Washington, covering even noon-tide with the pall of night! This awful anxiety is not merely in my mind, the air itself is leaden and weighs me under it with a pressure never felt before. Down the Mississippi the great battle decisive of its Valley's future is reported raging; the stake is vast though somewhat remote. But what strangles me with a fiendish care is the conflict now at height in Gettysburg; three days has surged the desperate battle; the last news leaves it unsettled still. Can we push Lee and his Southern legions back from our

North into their own territory? Or will the victorious South dictate its terms to us here in Washington? Methinks yon Capitol quakes in anxious dubitation.

And to-day is our festal anniversary of the Nation's birth. Four score and eight are the years which have circled over us from then, when we cut by violence the natal cord which tied us to our English mother. This morning I read the strong-worded pronouncement of 1776 with many a reflection; that was an act of separation, of secession, of revolt, which our rebels claim as their prototype; some of our seceding States re-affirmed that document of Jefferson. But now the tide of time runs different—we are to unify and not separate. The Constitution made the Union, but left within it the ever-widening rift of slavery which now the Nation has to close or die. Emancipation has been proclaimed by the President, erasing the line between slavery and freedom, where lies all the trouble. That is the new Declaration of Independence, far-reaching as the first, and to-day, I hope, will be the new Fourth of July for the Nation hereafter. But alas! this latest act of freedom has not been stamped with the seal of victory; somehow the Powers above do hesitate, withholding their approval. Just now I recall high Zeus weighing the two Fates of success and defeat in his

Olympian balance; I can almost see him yonder on the mountain holding his golden scales; up and down teeter the two sides, and I with every rise and fall am thrilled through and through with the lightning of hope and despair. I cannot endure the shocks, I must flee—but whither? Escape omnipresence I cannot, and this suspense is omnipresent, hung over this city, this country, this planet, aye this universe, methinks.

Well, somehow I have dropped into Lincoln's vein, I have caught from him these intimations of the Upper Presences, which seem to brood over me to-day, and over the time pregnant with mighty occurrences. I need him, and possibly he needs me, as he often says; I shall go and commune with him a little while. But see! here he comes and enters the open door.

Lincoln.

Indeed! I rather thought you were waiting for me, as I was for you. I come to get relief from the anxiety which dilacerates me. To-day is the great pay-day of the centuries; each side is paying off long-accumulated debts; the accounts of ages are being squared and the balance struck in blood, both in near-by Pennsylvania and in far-off Mississippi. It is the most significant of our national holidays; the Gods are to-day celebrating their Fourth of July, not ours. The Nation is chiefly

looking on in unspeakable suspense, though some of its people are terribly employing gunpowder—not in fun but in deadly clash. Seward, the time, the atmosphere, the very sunshine seems penitential; there is a divine penalty hovering over us, yea lurking within us. Now I understand Purgatory.

Seward.

Certainly I have been feeling something of the sort all day, waiting for the outcome. In accordance with the transmitted American custom, I started to read the Declaration of Independence; I shall have to confess that it seemed no longer to fit the present Fourth of July, which is in process of being made over. The stress then was upon division, rebellion; now it goes the other way. Still I pondered the old document with new reflections. I tell you, Mr. President, we are making the grand settlement to-day whether we shall lapse to separated Europe or advance to united America. In fact the outlook reaches much farther, as I have heard you intimate: it is being now decided whether the world shall continue an eternal grind between rasping national and racial boundaries, or become the one great unitary federation of nations and races, with peace universal. This Fourth of July is the new turning-point of total History. No wonder that the very Earth seems oppressed with

the new duty, and makes us feel sympathetic in suspense at her throeful parturition of the young æon.

Lincoln.

Excellent, Mr. Orator! Your lofty-toned words elevate me into their skiey region of faith and hope, of which I am in dear need. But let me surprise you with the remark that I have not been reading the Declaration of Independence or other patriotic lore, but a very ancient piece of writ, the Book of Job. Doubtless you can judge somewhat of my mind at present by such a choice. I never before understood that precious bit of biblical experience. I am Job, I feel me put under divine training; I have to learn what is misfortune, defeat, suffering, even death of the most beloved.

Seward.

I have noticed it, and must tell you that your life has deepened mine. I have often thought that you were born to suffer, it is a part of your great calling at the present time which is an era of universal suffering, an epoch of the Nation's supreme tribulation. You bear all its sorrows in you, and therein you are its deepest, truest representative. How you respond to the bereavement of the widow and the orphan! Sometimes I have to think that there beats in your bosom the whole huge folk-

heart, so compassionate are you with its thousand-fold throbs of war-wrought woe. In that I go to school to you daily, taking a lesson every time I hear you speak or intone your piteous voice. The Great Exemplar whom we adore, was such through being the Great Sufferer. Man, when he touches the bottom of his being, worships suffering as the ultimate fact of his own godlike nature. In such a time as this the whole People is crucified, nailed as it were to the cross of suffering, in the agony of the age's mighty transition. I look upon you and behold not merely an individual's anguish, but a world's, which is mirrored in you; many are beginning to have that same vision of you, and with the clarification of the years it will come to all. Such is the divine lesson which you have taught me, though you be unconscious of it, and you are imparting the same lesson to every soul that enters your presence. O friend, teacher, redeemer, do not think that your suffering is lost; it is your supreme, all-embracing gift, that which makes you savior of the Nation and of yourself, yea even of me.

Lincoln.

No greater comfort could be given to a poor sorrowed human heart than what you have spoken. It soothes me to reconciliation with my lot and with the Order above me, against which I some-

times revolt to sheer defiance, yea to downright execration. At least once or twice I have sunk to that damnation. Do you know I felt some relief when I read Job's words charging God with injustice, even with cruelty, and with deluding wretched man? Job too suffered quite to the point of sinking to unbelief in the good Providence. I could not forbear a throb of sympathy with him for the sake of myself, as I conned the passage in the light of my own experience.

Seward.

I question if I could get as much out of Job as I do out of you, though with your living commentary I shall this night turn to that book again. I may note, however, this seeming difference between you and Job: he represents nobody but himself, his is a purely individual relation between himself and his God, whereas I cannot think of you without taking you as the embodiment of your People, of your age; you are rather a national Job, perchance a world-Job, not simply a personal one, and you have to be scourged and disciplined by the Upper Powers—not merely for your own perfection, but for your Nation's, perchance for your race's. Then, O friend, let me add, you own love, you touch its source in every heart, you have roused it in me, and made it active, as never before.

Lincoln.

That would be indeed my ambition, but I know too well my shortcomings. I never could reach M'Clellan's affection, though he had a goodly portion of mine. And I never could quite find the heart of the Potomac army, though I have not yet given up the effort. But the thought of it brings us back to the furious battle which that army is now waging for us. See! in the nick comes the messenger! What, two telegrams! Break them open and read.

Seward.

Two victories! surrender of Vicksburg to Grant! Repulse of Lee at Gettysburg! Great God! this doomsday of suspense is cracking overhead!

Lincoln.

So to-day turns out a new celebration of the Fourth of July. The bell rings—the tocsin of an epoch! The war seems rounding a corner at last, and to start the march toward its close. Let us hurry off to hear the telegraph.

Book Twenty-fourth.

Gettysburg and Vicksburg.

Penning a letter with uplifted heart
From which the words flowed in the ink to paper,
For the two victories on one great day,
Here in the East and yonder in the West,
This of the older States, that of the new,
Lincoln was seated at his desk alone,
And pondered what these battles twinned might
mean

Born the same hour in mighty throes of pain
Which told the Nation's palingenesis.
Well he bethought their strange identity
Which tied them to one point of sundering time,
And coupled them in might to one high cause.
But soon he passed to muse their difference,

So far apart in space and character,
As well as in the kind of victory,
And in the consequences sprung of both.
Each deed of arms he felt as some far forecast,
The symbol of events yet to be born,
Which he had to construe as President.
While in such mood he sensed within his view
The sudden coming of the Presences
Who dropped at their own will into the White.

House,

The meeting of the Upper Cabinet
Called by themselves at time's articulation,
Where the historic cycle starts afresh
Its node of revolution round the ages.
So he again began to hold communion
With that weird otherwhere, his overworld
Which ran its strain ideal through his sensed life,
Immortal part bound with mortality,
Making eternal what belongs to Time,
Impressing God's advice upon the man
Through avenues hid in presentiment.

But now behold the transformation new
Which rises from those shapeless Presences
As they walk out of shadowy evolution
Into fixed forms of our humanity,
Whose outlines rounded in the yielding haze
With languaged lips just ready for a word.

Two private soldiers soon they hatch themselves
Out of the circumambient nest of air,
Both uniformed in blue with tilted caps,
The belted cartridge box around their loins,
A bayoneted musket in their hands,
Nor failed the dangling cup and haversack.
But each slipped in from opposite directions:
One marched in stately step out of the East
And tipped his head in military mien;
The other trod his easy Western gait
Dressed in free blouse and tattered overcoat,
Unshined his shoes, unpolished drooped his buttons
And were not always present in their ranks.
And still he eyed the goal without a flinch
Letting parade be minded on itself.

Lincoln addressed them both drawn up before him,
United in one link yet different:
“Welcome, thrice welcome, soldier boys in blue!
But tell me, what may be your errand hither?
Are you the bearers of some messages
From distant battlefields where fight now rages?”
Both strangely spoke at once in unison:
“We come to celebrate with you our deeds
Done on our Nation’s Independence Day;
We would restore the Union of these States
Preserving with it freedom for our People.”

Then Lincoln answered with his voice enkindled :
“ Both of you brave and patriotic too,
You speak a common purpose in your hearts
To which you offer life as sacrifice.
Alas ! I have to think now of our foes,
As honest and as valorous as we,
Fighting for what they hold to be the right
And yet we deem them wrong in thought and act.
That is the pang which we must often feel,
Conscience we have to crush by violence,
And yet we too affirm as rule our conscience.
But never mind this moody turn of mine :
I wish to hear whence both of you have come.
Of the same regiment you cannot be,
You seem to hail from regions quite diverse,
With charactery writ in ways and looks.”

The Western soldier clenched his gun more firmly,
And made one daring lurch as if assailant,
Then shot his words like bullets through the air :
“ From Vicksburg I to greet our President
Who keeps himself a comrade like ourselves.”
The Easterner stood stiff and soldierly,
He toed the line aright with polished shoes,
But showed no inner push to cross its bound,
While still obeying his superior ;
How fine he looked, well-postured in his stand !
His musket vied in sheen with his brass buttons,

Well-kempt, well-fed, with store of meat and
crackers,

Aesthetic in his graceful turns and whiskers,

He trimmed his answer to the President:

“From Gettysburg I come with salutation,

To tell of this war’s greatest victory.”

Lincoln stood silent at the words of each,

Weighing the triumphs of his armies both,

When the two soldiers faced each other squarely,

And then began to voice their mutual strains:

Gettysburger.

The fierce assault of Lee has been repulsed

When he once dared attack us on our line;

He has been driven back from Northern bounds,

No more to vex the State of Penn or Maryland.

Vicksburger.

Broken again by us has been the line,

As once we did before at Donelson;

And we shall breach it still and wipe it out

Wherever it be drawn against our marching host.

Gettysburger.

The enemy re-cross Potomac’s flood

In haste to tread once more their Southern land;

Let them assail us if they only dare,

We shall hurl back their bravest soldiery.

Vicksburger.

Our Mississippi flows now to the Gulf,
Without a fortressed foe to chain its course,
Its Valley's people welded are to one
Without division of the South from North.

Gettysburger.

We have expelled the dread invader's horde
From our free soil to land of slavery,
Methinks he will not try so soon again
To cross Potomac's fluid boundary.

Vicksburger.

But see our Mississippi's newest flow,
No longer rolling wroth within itself,
But surging joyfully it leaps unfettered,
It sighs no more its course half-slave, half-free
Its fury turns to rage of liberty.

Gettysburger.

We Gettysburgers shall again march forth,
(How often have we done the same before!)
And take position on the battle-line
Against the files of the Confederacy,
Ready to spend our blood for the Union's cause.

Vicksburger.

Vicksburgers we who never can be halted,
But shall sweep on and on to seek the foe,

And cleave his ranks embattled wherever found;
Already we are wheeling to the East,
And soon shall burst on your Atlantic coast,
Headed again by Generals our best,
Whom we have reared from our own people's ranks.

Gettysburger.

I must not fail to tell what thrilled me most
As I stood ranged for fight at Gettysburg:
A rumor darted up like lightning streaked,
And leaped as sudden spark from tongue to tongue
Electrifying all our regiment:
“M’Clellan is again to-day our leader!”
The shout ran through our own brigade at once
Then rolled in waves through all the field of
fighters,
And echoed far along the battle’s front;
Whence it might come no one has ever told,
Or who did start that strange hallucination,
For such we found it at the close of day
When it had done its work inspiring us,
And filled our hearts with throb of victory.
In yell responsive then we smote our foes
As they advanced up to us haughtily
So that they soon recoiled back to their lines
Whence they had charged upon our cannonry.
I must confess the fact of mine own soul:
Around M’Clellan’s wraith we fought the day,

And deemed we heard the voice of his command
Amid the furious fusilade of arms,
Encouraging to conquer though we die.
That ghostly rumor bubbled up unwilling
Out of the underself of that great army,
Where lies enthroned alone our Little Mac
As the ideal beloved of all our troops,
The chevalier of noble soldiery.
But now I come to speak my last appeal,
Like him the shade of the reality :
Give back to us M'Clellan's flesh and blood,
That we no longer have a ghost as leader ;
O President, restore him to our hearts !

Vicksburger.

Pardon my laugh, whose rise I cannot choke
With my wee tinct of Western courtesy ;
But let me fairly state the solid fact :
At Vicksburg we nor saw nor heard the spooks,
But had the actual Grant before us there
Directing the assault upon the walls,
Behind whose battlements the foe lay hid
Seeking to hold the line which he would breach,
And thus to keep division of the Union.
Already Grant had broken through that line,
And was again about to hit it there
A shivering blow, when it was yielded up
With all its garrison and war's munitions.

I too may voice to you, O President,
My fervent prayer for which I came so far :
The breaker of the Fatal Line, our Grant,
Bring from the West and give supreme command
That he do here just what he has done there,
Supplanting by his deed M'Clellan's wraith,
Which seems still to command—”

The flow of words unfinished on the air
Had stopped in sudden halt their rivalry
For Lincoln sprang up from his dreamy couch
Tense-nerved, full-orbed of eye, and statured
straight,
Peeping about upon the vacant space
Where those two soldiers stood erstwhile in talk ;
But they had fled and yet had left within
His sounding soul a loud reverberation,
Which roundly shouted to his brooding self
The echo of his own soliloquy,
Unconsciously preluding what he thought.
The deepest layer in his mental life
He now was ware and outered it in words :

“Colossal figure of M'Clellan still !
His very ghost yet dominates his army ;
I cannot help me worshipping that love,
That love undying for his personality,
Beneath whose image his devoted soldiers

March to the very death in ecstacy,
With vision of their leader on the clouds !
And yet that love is what I have to meet,
Alas ! encounter it in mortal combat
As that which now most stands in way of Union.
The shadow of M'Clellan I must fight,
For it commands above me yonder army,
And honest Meade, the appointed General,
Is more its officer than mine, I fear,
Even if unaware of what he is.
But what now threatens me with sorer trouble
Is that the shadow of M'Clellan's name
Has winged itself beyond its military field
Into the new domain political,
Where it will fortress forces of disunion,
And seek to win a love within the folk.
There too I have to grapple with M'Clellan,
Whose dragon still confronts me with oped jaws
Even among the people of the North.
That is my newest Fate which I must cleave ;
The spectral soldier touched the note aright
Saying that I must call Grant from the West
To break the Fatal Line here in the East,
That it may bar no more my way to Richmond.

But what if Grant, the Western limit-breaker,
Should fail to break the stubborn limit here,
Where he is separated from his own—

His soil, his river, and his soldiery?
Perchance the task may be too great for him,
As it has been for me, though I must try it.
Let all this come, at any rate I see
The way to circumvent Atlantic Fate,
As it has been revealed by bloody struggle:
In those new States, the children of the Union,
There is no North, no South, no Fatal Line
Once drawn by slavery on our Nation's face;
It has been blotted out by the huge hand
Smiting from yon gigantic free North-West
To make its valley free just like itself,
From Mississippi's mouth up to her fountain.
That army having done its first great task,
And broken down its bound of liberty,
Is setting out in mighty tread of valor
For these old States beside the hoary Ocean.
With it is marching my best hope of Heaven,
Which saves me from the hellish fiend Despair,
And keeps me from the curse of God Himself
Whose way I see through fiery discipline,
So that I hold myself the more in tune
With intercourse of higher Presences.

And now there overflows my brooding soul
A flight of far-borne reminiscences,
Which whisper me again my talk with Douglas,
Who pointed to the stream-bed of our River,

And designated it the marching road
For us to do the Nation's winning deed,
And circle all the States into new Union.
His word foresaid me mine own deepest presage,
Which I had felt far down in depths unspoken,
And tuned me to a note I still remember:
'That valley is the way to our salvation.'
So spake I then to sympathetic Douglas
Who thought with me the thought of all my
thoughts,
And fellow-felt with me my very heart.
Yea, we had dreamed together the same dream
Which he re-echoed when I told it him,
That we can never reach revolted Charleston
Unless we follow our great River's lead,
And, wheeling, turn the road to Washington.
So I had dreamed Fort Sumter's troubled night
The way which now the Hours realize:
And in my vision I had heard me named:
'Lincoln, your own true people of the West
Are coming round to see you at the Capital,
And in their might to break the Fatal Line
Which has been drawn so long against you here.
But I must tell to you the counterstroke:
With their last victory they bring your judgment,
With Nation resurrected, you are to die,
To Richmond you shall go and take your seat
Within the vacant Presidential chair,

But then you shall return to Washington
To meet the appointed hour of Destiny,
For the united folk will be your doom.' ''

At the recital of his ancient dream
Just to himself, the President sprang up
And stood as if he faced the Presences :
"Then welcome, Fate, I bid thee hasten hither !
Though thou me slay, I shall co-erce thee still,
I, master of thee through thine own success,
I, conqueror of life in very death,
Stamping my impress on my Nation's loftiest deed
Just in my personal evanishment ;
Immortal I through my mortality,
By ministry I win Fate's mastery.
So let me do and let me die, I would not stay
The coward victim blanched of Destiny ;
The lord of all my suffering I rise
To wrench from Fate my immortality,
Deathless dowered by my dying deed."'

Historic Intimations.

BOOK FIRST. On the morning of April 14, 1861, the news of the bombardment and capitulation of Fort Sumter had reached Washington. At once it was felt that the crisis of war or peace had arrived. In the forenoon Lincoln and his Cabinet assembled at the Executive Mansion, and a proclamation was drafted by the President, and approved by the Cabinet. But it was not sent forth till the next day, of which it bears the date (April 15).

There is little doubt that Lincoln during that Sunday afternoon (April 14) was much perplexed about issuing the proclamation. As regards himself and his party, the previous political canvass had shown a divided North and a united South. Practically no Republicans existed in the South, while in the North there were nearly as many non-Republicans as Republicans, who had elected him. Upon this division in the North the South had based much of its hope. (Popular vote of Lincoln 1,857,610; of Douglas 1,291,574.)

The key of the situation was held by Douglas,

[who had remained in Washington, well foreseeing the power which time was placing in his hands. Really it was not Lincoln and his Cabinet who threw the casting vote for issuing the proclamation which called for 75,000 men, but Senator Douglas. Without him and his following the conflict had better not begin, at least had better be deferred. This fact nobody appreciated more fully than Lincoln himself. His longing that Sunday afternoon to see Douglas must have been little short of agony. The latter after while sent him a request for an interview. Very pale compared to his feelings are the words of Lincoln's biographers (Nicolay & Hay) : "It is safe to say none were personally so welcome and significant as the unreserved encouragement and adhesion of Senator Douglas." (Vol. III, p. 86.)

Quite all that we know directly of this epoch-turning conference is contained in the brief paragraph: "Douglas went to the Executive Mansion between seven and eight o'clock on this Sunday evening, April 14, and being privately received by the President, these two remarkable men sat in confidential interview, without a witness, nearly two hours." (Nicolay & Hay, do.) Lincoln never afterwards told what was said at this conversation, being amply occupied with other matters; Douglas never left any account of it,

having died a few weeks later, which were also very full.

And yet the actual war for the Union takes its decisive start out of this interview, set a-going by the joint wills of these two supreme leaders, hitherto in opposition, now in co-operation. But History has no document of what was spoken, and so leaves us in the lurch at this point, surely the most important event of this earlier period of the war. But if the Muse of History deserts us, the Muse of Poetry enters the field, truly her own, and reconstructs from what went before and came after, that which must have passed between these two pivotal men of the time.

BOOK SECOND. Says Biographer Herndon, Lincoln's law partner for many years: "He always contended that he was doomed to a sad fate, and he repeatedly said to me when we were alone in our office: 'I am sure I shall meet with some terrible end.'" Most of the biographers give the details of the vision of himself as double in a mirror just after his election in 1860. Indeed "the thing" repeated itself three times before it finally vanished. His inference from it was: "I am fated to be taken off by a violent death." All this has its superstitious side, but such a view by no means exhausts this phase of Lincoln's character; it was his way of deeply communing with himself

and with the regnant powers which he felt to be over him.

BOOK THIRD. The Cabinet which Lincoln started with is listed as follows:

W. H. Seward, Secretary of State, New York.

S. P. Chase, Secretary of Treasury, Ohio.

Simon Cameron, Secretary of War, Pa.

Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, Conn.

C. B. Smith, Secretary of the Interior, Ind.

Edward Bates, Attorney General, Missouri.

M. Blair, Postmaster General, Maryland.

BOOK FOURTH. Herndon observes that Lincoln (this was during his Springfield life) was "constantly endeavoring to unravel his many dreams." He had his own dream-world which always meant to him something, and became his expression of what others may have reached through philosophy or religion. Another friend of many years (See Lamon's Life of Lincoln) dwells on Lincoln's tendency to presentiment and revery, which were evidently his form of construing the inner nature not only of himself, but of the world.

BOOK FIFTH. The First Proclamation contained the call, issued to the various States which had not seceded, for troops (75,000) to put down the rebellion already begun in the Cotton States. As already intimated, it was not given out till it received the sanction of Douglas, who

sent forth the next morning his call alongside of the President's Proclamation, that he "would sustain the President in the exercise of all his constitutional functions to preserve the Union, and maintain the Government, and defend the Capital," though still "opposed to the Administration on all its political issues." This seeming exception was really in the interest of uniting both parties in support of the Union.

BOOK SIXTH. Of the Southern States at this time Virginia may be taken as the best representative—not so devoted to Secession as the Gulf States, nor so devoted to Union as the Border Slave-States. It had elected a Union Convention, which, however, was determined to dominate the Union. Lincoln summed up not only the Virginia attitude but the Virginia consciousness in one of his telling metaphors: "Your (Union) Convention in Richmond has been sitting now nearly two months and all that they have done has been to shake the rod over my head." No prominent statesmen appears above Virginia's horizon at this time; perhaps her most typical public man in mind and action was Judge George W. Summers, President of the Union Convention.

BOOK SEVENTH. The falling-off in Virginia's statesmanship at the time of war was strikingly compensated by the superiority of her soldiership.

Her genius seems to have turned military from its former supreme political bent.

BOOK EIGHTH. Lamon was the chosen intimate of Lincoln, taken by the latter from Illinois to Washington, who said to him: “I want you with me if there is to be a fight. * * * You must go and go to stay.” (Lamon’s Recollections of Abraham Lincoln, edited by Dorothy Lamon, p. 29.) Secretary Usher, who was in Washington during the period of the war, writes concerning Lamon: “You were with him, I know, more than any other one,” and “he gave free expression of his opinions and of his trials and troubles” to you (Lamon) as “his confidential friend during the time he was President.” (Letter dated 1885, cited in preceding book, Preface.)

On the death of Ellsworth, see Lincoln’s letter to his parents (Works II, p. 52): “In size, in years, and in youthful appearance a boy only, his power to command men was surpassingly great. This power, combined with a fine intellect, an indomitable energy, and a taste altogether military, constituted in him the best natural talent in that department I ever knew.” Ellsworth also had accompanied Lincoln’s Presidential party from Illinois.

BOOK NINTH. For the political matters here discussed see Lincoln’s Message to Congress, July

4, 1861 (Works II, p. 55). For the personal incidents, see *Lincoln & Ann Rutledge*, Book VIII, and *Lincoln in the Black Hawk War*, *passim*.

BOOK TENTH. The first battle of Bull Run was fought July 21, 1861. First part of the day was favorable to the Federals. Then the cry arose: "Johnson's army has come!" and the panic began. Yet there was a panicky flight on the other side, which met Jefferson Davis coming from Richmond to Manassas. Says the Confederate General, J. E. Johnston: "The Confederate army was more disorganized by victory than that of the United States by defeat." He says that pursuit was impossible. Still he clung to his part of the field while Federals fled.

BOOK ELEVENTH. The factious spirit of the Unionists of Missouri, and especially in St. Louis, caused Lincoln more trouble than the State's Disunionists. For an account of Mrs. Jessie Benton Fremont, see Nicolay & Hay's *Lincoln IV*, p. 413. Lincoln said of her afterwards: "She sought an audience with me at midnight and taxed me so violently with many things that I had to exercise all the awkward tact I have to avoid quarreling with her. She more than once intimated that General Fremont * * * could set up for himself."

BOOK TWELFTH. M'Clellan gave to Lincoln the greatest personal problem of his administration—problem both military and civil.

BOOK THIRTEENTH. The marked distinction between the Eastern and Western armies in character and achievement began to show itself decisively at Fort Donelson.

BOOK FOURTEENTH. William Wallace Lincoln died Feb. 20, 1862. Lincoln's deepest domestic affliction (see Carpenter's account, *Six Months at the White House*, p. 116). Repeatedly he shut himself up and gave way to his melancholy and sorrow. A clergyman was called and from this event some have dated a religious change in Lincoln. The boy was in his twelfth year.

BOOK SEVENTEENTH. It is now generally agreed that the Proclamation of Emancipation was the central act of Lincoln's Administration. It has turned out one of those historic deeds whose greatness increases with the perspective of years. The President's first suggestion of it to the Cabinet was made about July 22, 1862, amid great disasters. Seward favored it, but urged that it be postponed till it was backed up by military success. Lincoln followed this view, saying that "its wisdom struck him with great force." After the victory of Antietam, the subject was again brought before

the Cabinet by the President (Sept. 22). Of this epochal meeting two members of the Cabinet (Chase and Welles) have left accounts in their diaries, noting particularly the manner of Lincoln. Chase writes, citing the President: "I determined, as soon as it (the rebel army) should be driven out of Maryland, to issue a proclamation of emancipation. I said nothing to any one, but made the promise to myself and (hesitating a little) to my Maker. The rebel army is now driven out, and I am going to fulfil that promise." The account of Secretary Welles is differently worded, but is of the same general purport: "The President remarked that he had made a vow, a covenant, and that if God gave us the victory in the approaching battle, he would consider it an indication of Divine Will, and that it was his duty to move forward in the cause of emancipation. God had decided this matter in favor of the slaves. He was satisfied it was right, was confirmed and strengthened in his action by the vow and the results. His mind was fixed, his decision made, but he wished his paper announcing his course as correct in terms as it could be made without any change in his determination." (*The Diary of Gideon Welles*, I, 143; also Warden's *Chase*, p. 481-2.) Very impressive and significant of Lincoln are both these

statements; the comment lies near that his *other* Cabinet has made the decision and is voicing it through him to his appointed Cabinet.

This first Proclamation was admonitory; but as the warning remained unheeded, the second and actual edict of freedom was issued January 1, 1863.

BOOK TWENTY-FOURTH. The battle of Gettysburg ought to have been as decisive as that of Vicksburg; but it was not; why? Military authorities have said again and again that Meade let slip his opportunities; the President also thought so. He said: "We had them within our grasp, but nothing I could say or do could make that army move." It or its officers or both acted as if they deemed their task fulfilled in repelling the attack of Lee. John Hay writes, citing his diary: "Lincoln had been most unfavorably impressed by a phrase in Meade's general order after the victory in which he spoke of 'driving the invader from our soil.' Lincoln said upon reading it: 'This is a dreadful reminiscence of M'Clellan, it is the same spirit. * * * Will our generals never get that idea out of their heads? The whole country is our soil.' "

As to the Confederates, their statesmanship made its greatest mistake in not bringing about peace after these two Federal victories. To be sure

they would have had to accept Union and the abolition of slavery; still they would have been spared their later and greatest calamities. But the easy escape of Lee with his booty seems to have filled them with an utter contempt of Federal generalship, and thereby to have drawn the line of separation more deeply than ever. Hence a new Iliad of woes.

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